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THE NOVELS

OF

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH

CABINET EDITION

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The Novels of

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH

THE MISER'S DAUGHTER

VOLUME I

NEW YORK:
J. F. TAYLOR AND COMPANY
1903

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TO

MY THREE DEAR DAUGHTERS

FANNY, EMILY-MARY, AND BLANCHE

I OFFER THIS TALE

W. H. A.

October 15, 1842

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THE MISER'S DAUGHTER

BOOK THE FIRST

RANDULPH CREW

I

The Miser's dwelling in the Little Sanctuary—Opposite neighbours—Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine—Jacob Post—Randulph Crew.

IN a large, crazy, old-fashioned house at the corner of the Little Sanctuary in Westminster, and facing the abbey, dwelt, in the year 1744, a person named Scarve. From his extraordinary penurious habits, he received the appellation of *Starve*, and was generally denominated by his neighbours "Miser Starve." Few, if any, of those who thus designated him, knew much about him, none of them being allowed to cross his threshold; but there was an air, even externally, about his dwelling, strongly indicative of his parsimonious character. Most of the windows in the upper stories, which, as is usual with habitations of that date, far overhung the lower, were boarded up; and those not thus closed were so covered with dust and dirt that it was impossible

to discern any object through them. Many parts of the building were in a ruinous condition, and, where the dilapidations were not dangerous, were left in that state; but wherever some repairs were absolutely necessary to keep the structure together, they were made in the readiest and cheapest manner. The porch alone preserved its original character. It projected far beyond the doorway, and was ornamented with the arms of a former occupant of the habitation, carved in bold relief in oak, and supported by two mermaids sculptured in the same wood. All the lower windows were strongly grated, and darkened like the upper with long-accumulated dust. The door was kept constantly bolted and barred, even in the daytime; and the whole building had a dingy, dismal, and dungeon-like aspect.

Mr. Scarve's opposite neighbour, who was as curious as opposite neighbours generally are, and who was a mercer named Deacle, used to spend hours with his wife and daughter, who were as curious as himself, in reconnoitring the miser's dwelling. But their curiosity was rarely, if ever gratified, except that they occasionally saw some member of the family go forth, or return. Another constant spy upon the mysterious abode was Peter Pokerich, a young barber and perruquier, occupying the next house to the mercer, but whose motives were not, like the other's, entirely those of curiosity. Having completed his apprenticeship about a twelvemonth before, Peter Pokerich had at that time settled in the Little Sanctuary, and had already obtained a fair share of business, being much employed in

dressing the wigs of the lawyers frequenting Westminster Hall. He was a smart, dapper little fellow, with no contemptible opinion of himself, either as to mental or personal qualifications, and being determined to push his fortune with the sex, had, in the first instance, paid very marked attentions to the mercer's daughter, Thomasine, or, as she was styled by her admirers, "the Fair Thomasine"; and these attentions, it was pretty evident, were not altogether unacceptable. Just, however, as he was on the eve of declaring himself, and soliciting the hand of the fair Thomasine, with little apprehension of a refusal, he accidentally beheld the miser's daughter, Hilda Scarve, and his inflammable heart taking fire at her beauty, which was indeed sufficiently ravishing to captivate a colder breast than his, he henceforth became her slave, and could no longer endure the auburn locks, the hazel orbs, the pretty features, and plump little person of the fair Thomasine, which had once appeared so attractive in his eyes. Another consideration was not without its weight in turning the scale of his affections. Hilda's father was reputed to be of immense wealth; she was his only child, at least so it was generally understood, and would, of course, inherit the whole of his vast hoards; and as, furthermore, he was an old man, it could not, in the course of nature, be very long before the property must come to her. This consideration decided Peter in favour of the miser's daughter, and it was the hope of obtaining a glimpse of her that made him play the spy upon her father's dwelling.

The repairs previously alluded to were made by the miser's servant, Jacob Post, who, on this occasion, stepped over the way to borrow a ladder from Mr. Deacle. For reasons of his own the mercer readily complied with the request, and when Jacob's work was done, and he brought back the ladder, he was invited by its owner to his back-parlour, where Mrs. Deacle and the fair Thomasine were seated, and where a substantial repast was laid out. Jacob was requested to sit down, and with some hesitation complied. A plate, loaded with cold beef, was next offered him, and he cleared it in an inconceivably short space of time. The plate was again filled, and again emptied, and as his appetite seemed in no ways stayed, and the edge-bone was nearly bared, a large remnant of a potato-pie in a brown earthenware dish was substituted. To the astonishment of the party, he soon disposed of it. These viands requiring to be washed down, Mr. Deacle took a jug of ale, which stood at one corner of the table, and pouring out a large foaming glass, offered it to his guest, winking as he did so at his wife, as much as to say, "We have him now." Whether or not Jacob saw the wink is of little import; he took the glass, drained it to the last drop, and sprang to his feet.

"Why, you're not going?" cried Mr. Deacle.

"Yes, I am," replied Jacob, in his deep gruff voice.

"Well—but stop a bit, I've something to say to you," rejoined Mr. Deacle.

"Master'll wonder what I'm doing here so long,"

returned Jacob. "He watched me cross over with the ladder."

"You should have thought of that before you sat down," remarked Mrs. Deacle, somewhat spitefully. "If you would draw another jug of ale, my love, I dare say Mr. Jacob would risk incurring his master's displeasure, and stay a few minutes longer."

"No, I wouldn't," replied Jacob, looking at the same time wistfully at the jug. "No, I wouldn't," he added, slightly softening his tone.

"Try him," whispered Mrs. Deacle to her spouse.

Mr. Deacle took the hint, and likewise took up the jug, and winking at his wife, proceeded to a side door, opening upon a flight of stone steps, evidently leading to the lower part of the premises, and disappeared. With true feminine tact, Mrs Deacle had perceived Jacob's weak point. He seemed spell-bound. The temptation of the "other jug" was irresistible. He scratched his forehead with the point of his great thumb-nail, pushed up the little brown scratch wig covering the top of his head still higher, glanced at the door, but did not attempt to withdraw. The figure he now cut was so ridiculous that both ladies burst into screams of laughter. Not in the slightest degree disconcerted, Jacob maintained his position, and eyed them with a look so stern that their merriment speedily died off in a quaver. The Formidable certainly predominated over the Ridiculous in Jacob's appearance. He was six feet two in height, with a large-boned frame, not encumbered with too much flesh, and immense hands and feet. Though slightly in-kneed,

he held himself as erect as an old soldier. He had a grim black muzzle, a wide mouth garnished with keen white teeth, the masticatory powers of which he had just so satisfactorily exhibited, thick and jetty eyebrows, and an enormous nose slightly tinged towards its extremity with a mulberry hue. He wore an old grey cloth coat, of the formal cut in vogue about twenty years before, with a row of plate buttons extending from the collar to the skirts, as well as others on the pockets, and which, though it only reached to his knees, must have dangled down to its original owner's ankles. His waistcoat was of the same material as the upper garment, and evidently dated back to the same remote period. A dirty neckcloth, looking positively white from its contrast with his swarthy chin, was twisted round his throat. He possessed great personal strength, and, indeed, was reported to have driven off, single-handed, three housebreakers who had contrived one night to effect an entrance into his master's habitation. It was thought that the miser retained him as much for self-defence as for his other services; and it was even said that in some money-lending transactions in which Mr. Scarve had been engaged with suspicious characters, Jacob stood by on guard.

By this time, the mercer had returned with a jug, whose frothing head made Jacob's mouth water. Seeing the effect produced on him, Mr. Deacle indulged in a sly chuckle.

"Ah, Jacob," he said, feigning a commiserating tone, "I fear you don't get such liquor as this with

your master. He don't brew over strong—not too much malt and hops, eh?"

"That's true enough, sir," replied Jacob gruffly.

"Do you get any ale at all, Jacob?" inquired Mrs. Deacle.

"No," replied Jacob, in a tone so abrupt that it made the good dame start, and elicited a slight scream from the fair Thomasine.

"Odd's precious!" exclaimed Mrs. Deacle, "how the fellow does frighten one. And so you have no ale?"—(Jacob shook his head)—"nor small beer?"—(another negative)—"then what *do* you drink, for wine or spirits must be out of the question?"

"Treacle-beer," rejoined Jacob; "and little enough of that."

"So I should think," remarked Mr. Deacle cunningly. "Come, come, friend Jacob!—this may be very well for your master, but it won't do with me. Your nose would never keep its goodly colour on such thin potations."

A grim smile crossed Jacob's face, and he tapped the feature in question.

"I understand," replied the mercer, winking; "private cellar, ah! Perfectly right, Jacob. Private larder, too, I'll be sworn. You couldn't live on Miser Starve's—I mean, Mr. Scarve's—allowance. Impossible, Jacob—impossible! Take a glass, Jacob. Your master must be very rich, eh?"

"I don't know," replied Jacob, after tossing off the glass; "he doesn't live like a rich man."

"There I differ from you, Jacob," returned the

mercer; "he lives like a miser, and misers are always rich."

"May be," replied Jacob, turning away.

"Stop, stop!" cried the mercer — "you must finish this jug before you go. Are you the only servant in the house?"

"The only *man*-servant," replied Jacob, looking as if he did not relish the question; "but there's sometimes a *cheer*woman, and the two ladies does for themselves."

"Do for themselves!" ejaculated Mrs. Deacle "How dreadful!"

"Dreadful indeed!" echoed the fair Thomasine, with an expression of ineffable disgust, theatrically fine in its effect.

"Well, I *should* like to see the inside of your master's house, Jacob, I confess," pursued Mrs. Deacle.

"You wouldn't wish to repeat the visit, ma'am, if you had once been there," he answered drily.

"I hope the miser doesn't ill-treat his daughter," said the fair Thomasine. "Poor thing, how I pity her! Such a sweet creature, and such a tyrant of a father!"

"She's not ill-treated, miss," rejoined Jacob gruffly; "and she's not so much to be pitied as you suppose; nor is master a tyrant, by no means, miss."

"Don't be offended, Jacob," interposed the mercer, pouring out a glass, and handing it to him. "Women always fancy themselves ill-treated either by their fathers, husbands, or brothers—all except their lovers, eh! Jacob?"

"I'm sure, my love, nobody can say *I* complain," said Mrs. Deacle.

"Nor I, father," added Thomasine; "as to lovers, I know nothing about them, and don't desire to know."

"Bless me! how you take one up," rejoined Mr. Deacle sharply. "Nobody does say that either of you complains. Surely, Jacob, the old lady whom I always see with your master's daughter can't be her mother?"

"No, she's her aunt," replied Jacob.

"On the father's side?"

"Mother's."

"I thought as much; and her name is——?"

Jacob looked as though he would have said, "What's that to you?" but he answered, "Mrs. Clinton."

"You'll think me rather curious, Jacob," pursued the mercer, "but I should like to know the name of your master's daughter. What is it, eh?"

"Hilda," replied Jacob.

"Hilda!—dear me—a very singular name," cried Mrs. Deacle.

"Singular, indeed! but sweetly pretty," sighed the fair Thomasine.

"Probably a family name," remarked the mercer. "Well, Miss Hilda's a charming creature, Jacob—charming."

"She *is* charmin'," repeated Jacob emphatically.

"Not very well dressed, though," muttered the mercer, as if speaking to himself; and then he added aloud—"She'll be a great catch, Jacob—a

great catch. Any engagement—any one in view—any lover, eh?"

"No one," replied Jacob. "Unless," he added, bursting into a hoarse laugh, "it's your next-door neighbour, Peter Pokerich, the barber."

"Peter Pokerich!" screamed the fair Thomasine, starting to her feet, and assuming an attitude of distraction.

"Mercy on us! what's the matter, Tommy?" cried the mercer, in surprise.

"Don't ask me, father," rejoined the young lady, gasping like a tragic actress, and passing her hand across her brow as if to clear off some imaginary hair—her own auburn tresses being trimly secured beneath a pretty little fly-cap. "Tell me, Jacob," she added, catching his arm, "is my—is Peter—is the faithless one Hilda Scarve's lover?—has he declared his passion?—is he accepted?—tell me all, Jacob, and whatever effort it may cost me, I will bear it."

"I've nothing more to tell than this," replied Jacob, who listened with imperturbable calmness to this passionate and touching address—"he has lately taken to followin' young missis when she goes out to walk with her aunt."

"But has not dared to address her, Jacob," cried the fair Thomasine breathlessly.

"Not till t'other day," replied Jacob, "and then he stopped her just as she was enterin' the house. Luckily, I was there, and I guv' him a taste of my crab-stick, which I'll engage he'll remember."

"Cudgelled!—Peter false, and cudgelled!—cruel, yet kind, Jacob!" cried the fair Thomasine, relaxing

her hold, and staggering back. "This is too much —support me, mother!"

"What's the matter with you, Tommy, I say?—are you going distracted?" cried the mercer.

"Fetch the ratafia, my dear, and don't ask questions," replied his wife. "Don't you see there's been a secret attachment?" she added, in an undertone—"that deceitful little barber has played her false. But I'll bring him to his senses, I'll warrant him. Poor thing! this is just the state I was thrown into when I heard of your going to Stourbridge Fair with cousin Sally. The ratafia! the ratafia!—quick! quick!"

The mercer opened a cupboard, took out the cordial, gave it to his wife, and then motioning Jacob to follow him, rushed out of the room so precipitately, that he overset a person who was listening at the door, and who proved to be no other than Peter Pokerich.

"What! you here, sir," cried Mr. Deacle, in astonishment. "Then you've heard what has passed. Go in to my daughter, and make her mind easy directly."

"If he doesn't, I'll give him another taste of the crab-stick," added Jacob.

"But it would be highly indecorous—highly improper—in me to go in just now, Mr. Deacle," remonstrated Peter.

"Not more indecorous, or improper, than listening at the door," rejoined the mercer. "Go in directly, sir."

"Ay, go!" added Jacob menacingly.

And Peter, seeing opposition in vain, opened the door and sneaked in. A stifled scream and an hysterical laugh succeeded his entrance.

The mercer accompanied Jacob to the street door, and, as he passed through the shop, pointed out the different rich stuffs to him.

"I wish you could induce your young mistress to come and look at my assortment of stuffs," he said; "it is the choicest in town, though I say it, who shouldn't say it. I've garden silks, Italian silks, brocades, tissues, cloth of silver, ditto gold, fine Mantua silks, rich Genoa velvets, English ditto, embossed ditto. Or, if she wants commoner stuffs, I've fine thread satins, both striped and plain, fine Mohair silks, satinets, burdets, Persianets, Norwich crapes, anterines, silks for hoods and scarfs, hair camlets, sagathees, shalloons, and right Scotch plaids. Can you recollect all these articles?"

"I should need a better memory than I have to recollect half of 'em," replied Jacob.

"I would send her some stuffs to look at, if you think her father wouldn't object," said the mercer; "this black velvet would suit her exactly, or this rich Italian silk."

"It would cost me my place to take them," replied Jacob; "and yet, as you say, they would become her purely. But it's of no use thinkin' of them," he added, walking away.

"One word more, Jacob," said Mr. Deacle, detaining him, and whispering in his ear; "I didn't like to ask the question before the women—but they *do* say your master's a Papist and a Jacobite."

"Who say so?" cried Jacob, loudly and gruffly. "Speak up and tell me!"

"Why, the neighbours," replied the mercer, somewhat abashed.

"Then tell 'em from me that it's a lie," rejoined Jacob. And, heedless of any further attempts to detain him, he strode away.

One night, about a month after the incident above related, which took place at the latter end of April 1744, just as Peter Pokerich was in the act of shutting up his shop, he observed a horseman turn out of King Street, and ride towards him. It was sufficiently light to enable him to discover, on a nearer approach, that the stranger was a young man, about one or two-and-twenty, with a tall well-proportioned figure, at once vigorous and symmetrical, extremely regular and finely formed features, glowing with health and manly beauty, and slightly, though not unbecomingly, embrowned by exposure to the sun. Apparently disdaining to follow the fashion of the period, or proud of his own waving brown locks, the young man suffered them to fall in their native luxuriance over his shoulders. The fashion of his dark green riding-dress—which, ill-made as it appeared in the eyes of the knowing barber, revealed his fine figure to a great advantage—as well as his general appearance, proclaimed him from the country. Looking hard at Peter as he advanced, the stranger drew up beside him.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Scarve lives?" he asked.

Peter started and stared at his interrogator in speechless astonishment. The young man looked surprised in his turn, and repeated the inquiry.

"Miser Starve—beg pardon!—Mr. Scarve? but he's generally known by the former name hereabouts," cried Peter. "Oh yes, sir, I *do* know where Mr. Scarve lives."

"Then, probably, you will have the goodness to direct me to the house," returned the young man. "This is the Little Sanctuary, is it not?"

"Yes, sir! yes!" replied Peter. "But what may be your business with Miser Starve — beg pardon again!—Mr. Scarve?"

"My business is not of much consequence," rejoined the young man, somewhat coldly and haughtily, "but it refers to Mr. Scarve himself."

"Beg pardon, sir—no offence, I hope," returned Peter, in a deprecatory tone; "but Mr. Starve—bless me! how my tongue runs—Mr. Scarve is such a very odd man. He won't see you unless your business is *very* particular. Will you favour me with your name, sir?"

"My name is Randulph Crew," returned the stranger.

"Crew—Crew!" repeated Peter; "that should be a Cheshire name. Excuse the liberty, but are you from that county, sir?"

"I am—I am!" replied the other impatiently.

"Ah! knew it at once, sir. Can't deceive me," rejoined Peter. "Fine head of hair, sir, very fine; but must lose it. Very well for Cheshire—but won't do in London. Ladies will laugh at you.

Nothing so ungenteel as one's own hair. I have a fine head of hair myself, but can't wear it. Must have a peruke. Perukes are as essential to a gentleman now-a-days as lace to his clothes. I've wigs of all sorts, all fashions, all prices; the minor-bob; the Sunday buckle; the bob-major; the apothecary's bush; the physical and chirurgical tie; the scratch, or Blood's skull covering; the Jehu's Jemmy, or white-and-all-white; the campaign; and the Ramillies. Step in, and I'll show you the last new periwig—the Villiers—brought in by the great beau of that name—heard of him, I dare say, sir—and which all our brights, smarts, putts, and jemmies are wearing. I've the counterpart of Beau Villiers' own periwig, which, between ourselves—for it must go no further—I obtained from his gentleman, Mr. Crackenthorpe Cripps. It's quite a wonder. Do step in, and look at it. It'll quite ravish you."

"Thank you, friend; I am content with the covering nature has given my head," replied Randulph.

"And with very good reason, sir," replied Peter; "but fashion, sir — fashion is arbitrary, and has decreed that no man shall wear his own hair. Therefore, you must, perforce, sir, adopt the periwig."

"Will you show me Mr. Scarve's residence, or must I apply for information elsewhere?" cried the young man, wearied with the barber's loquacity.

"Not so fast, sir—not so fast," replied Peter; "I must tell you something about the old gentleman first. Do you know him, sir?"

Randulph Crew uttered a hasty negative.

"Then *I do*," pursued Peter. "Terrible miser, sir—terrible!—denies himself all the comforts of existence—makes his family and servants live upon a bare bone for a week—thinks of nothing but his gold—and, as to his daughter——"

"Oh, he has a daughter, has he?" interrupted Randulph. "I was not aware of it. Is she at all like him?"

"Like him!—no!" echoed Peter. "She's beautiful beyond description." But, thinking such commendation rather injudicious in the present case, he checked himself as maladroitly as a horse pulled up too suddenly, and added, "At least some people say so; but, for my own part, I can see nothing to admire in her."

"Well, perhaps I may judge for myself," observed Randulph.

"Perhaps you may," quavered Peter. "He's just the man to captivate her," he thought. "I wish I could misdirect him; but most probably Jacob won't admit him."

"And now, friend, will you show me the house?" cried Randulph.

"With pleasure, sir—with pleasure," replied Peter, pointing to the opposite habitation; "there it is, at the corner."

Vexed at having been so long and so unnecessarily detained, Randulph Crew turned his horse's head, and dismounting before the miser's door, knocked loudly against it with the butt-end of his heavy riding-whip. Peter anxiously watched his

proceedings; but as no answer was returned to the summons, he began to hope the young man would go away; but in this he was disappointed, for the latter renewed his application, and did not desist till checked by the gruff voice of Jacob Post, who shouted from a little grated window, through which he reconnoitred the intruder, "Halloo! what's the matter?—who's there?"

"Is Mr. Scarve at home?" asked Randulph. "I want to see him."

"Then you can't," rejoined Jacob in the harshest accents, but which sounded like music in the ears of the attentive Peter.

"But I must and will," rejoined Randulph, in a peremptory tone. "I have a packet to deliver to him—to his own hands—an important packet. Tell him that."

"A Jacobite, I'll be sworn," cried Peter to himself. "I must watch him narrowly. I should feel gratified in being the means of hanging that young man."

"Well, I'll take your message to my master," growled Jacob, after a short pause. "But I must scrut*inize* you a little before I admit you. You seem to me, as far as I can make out, to have a good deal of the cut of a highwayman about you."

"He, he, he?—good, Jacob—good!" tittered Peter.

Some minutes elapsed before Jacob, who had disappeared, returned. A heavy tread was heard along the passage leading to the door, succeeded by the rattling of a chain, the clanking of bars, and

the shooting back of a couple of ponderous bolts. The door was then thrown open, and exhibited the great gaunt figure of Jacob, holding a lantern in one hand, the light of which he threw full upon the face of the young man, while he kept the other hand, which grasped the redoubted crab-stick, out of view. Satisfied, at length, with the investigation, he growled forth, "It'll do, master'll see you. You may come in."

"That for your trouble, friend," said Randulph, slipping a crown into Jacob's hand, as he tied his horse's bridle to a ring in the doorpost.

"I wonder what this is given for?" muttered Jacob, as he pocketed the coin. "It's the only suspicious thing I've noticed about him. I must keep an eye upon him. But I dare say he only wants to see young missis, and she's worth more than twenty crowns to look at."

Thus ruminating, he admitted Randulph into the passage, locked and bolted the door, took the light out of the lantern, and placing it in a copper candlestick, led the way towards a back room.

While the door was being fastened, Peter Pokerich darted across the way, shouting to Randulph, "I'll take care of your horse, sir." No attention, however, being paid to the offer, he hurried back for a light, and began carefully to examine the saddle, peering into the holsters, and trying to open the saddle-bags to see whether he could obtain any clue to the supposed Jacobite principles of the owner.

II

The Miser and his Daughter—Randulph delivers the Packet to the Former—Its Reception.

FOLLOWING his conductor along the passage, the boards of which, being totally destitute of carpet or cloth, sounded hollowly beneath their feet, Randulph Crew glanced at the bare walls, the dusty and cob-web-festooned ceiling, and the staircase, as devoid of covering as the passage, and could not but admit that the account given him by the barber of Mr. Scarve's miserly habits was not exaggerated. Little time, however, was allowed him for reflection. Jacob marched quickly on, and pushing open a door on the right, ushered him into his master's presence.

Mr. Scarve was an old man, and looked much older than he really was—being only sixty-five, whereas he appeared like eighty. His frame was pinched as if by self-denial, and preternaturally withered and shrivelled; and there was a thin, haggard, and almost hungry look about his face, extremely painful to contemplate. His features were strongly marked and sharp, and his eye, grey, keen, and piercing. He was dressed in a threadbare cloth robe, trimmed with sable, and wore a velvet nightcap, lined with cotton, on his head. The rest of his habiliments were darned and patched in an unseemly manner. Beside him was a small table, on which was laid a ragged and dirty cloth, covered

with the remains of his scanty meal, which Randulph's arrival had interrupted. Part of a stale loaf, a slice of cheese, and a little salt constituted the repast.

Everything in the room bespoke the avaricious character of its owner. The panelled walls were without hangings or decoration of any kind. The room itself, it was evident, had known better days and richer garniture. It was plain, but handsome in its character, and boasted a large and well-carved chimney-piece, and a window filled with stained glass displaying the armorial bearings of the former possessor of the house, though now patched in many places with paper, and stopped up in others with rags. This window was strongly grated, and the bars were secured in their turn by a large padlock, placed inside the room. Over the chimney-piece were placed a couple of large blue and white china bottles, with dried everlasting flowers stuck in the necks. There were only two chairs in the room and a stool. The best chair was appropriated by the miser himself. It was an old-fashioned affair, with great wooden arms, and a hard leathern back, polished like a well-blacked shoe by frequent use. A few coals, carefully piled into a little pyramid, burnt within the bars, as if to show the emptiness of the grate, and diffused a slight gleam, like a mocking laugh, but no sort of heat. Beside it sat Mrs. Clinton, an elderly maiden lady, almost as wintry-looking and pinched as her brother-in-law. This antiquated lady had a long thin neck, a turned-up nose, and a skin as yellow as parchment; but

the expression of her countenance, though rather sharp and frosty, was kindly. She wore a close-fitting gown of dark camlet, with short tight sleeves, that by no means concealed the angularities of her figure. Her hair, which was still dark as in her youth, was gathered up closely behind, and surmounted by the small muslin cap then in vogue.

The object, however, that chiefly riveted Randulph's attention on his entrance was neither the miser himself nor his sister-in-law—it was his daughter. Her beauty was so extraordinary that it acted like a surprise upon him, occasioning a thrill of delight, mingled with a feeling of embarrassment. Rising as he entered the room, she gracefully, and with much natural dignity, returned his salutation, which, through inadvertence, he addressed almost exclusively to her. Hilda Scarve's age might be guessed at nineteen. She was tall, exquisitely proportioned, with a pale clear complexion, set off by her rich raven tresses, which, totally unrestrained, showered down in a thick cloud over her shoulders. Her eyes were large and dark, luminous, but steady, and indicated firmness of character. Her look was grave and sedate, and there was great determination in her beautifully formed but closely compressed lips. Her aspect and deportment exhibited the most perfect self-command, and whatever effect might be produced upon her by the sudden entrance of the handsome visitor, not a glance was suffered to reveal it, while he, on the contrary, could not repress the admiration excited by her beauty. He was, however, speedily recalled to himself by the miser,

who, rapping the table impatiently, exclaimed, in a querulous tone—

"Your business, sir?—your business?"

"I have come to deliver this to you, sir," replied Randulph, producing a small packet, and handing it to the miser. "I should tell you, sir," he added, in a voice of emotion, "that it was my father's wish that this packet should be given to you a year after his death—but not before."

"And your father's name," cried the miser, bending eagerly forward, and shading his eyes so as to enable him to see the young man more distinctly, "was—was——"

"The same as my own, Randulph Crew," was the reply.

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed the miser, falling back in his chair, "and is he dead?—my friend—my old friend!" and he pressed his hand to his face, as if to hide his emotion.

Hilda bent anxiously over him, and tried to soothe him, but he pushed her gently away.

"Having discharged my mission, I will now take my leave," said Randulph, after a slight pause, during which he looked on in silent astonishment. "I will call at some other time, Miss Scarve, to speak to your father respecting the packet."

"No, stay!" cried Hilda hastily. "Some old and secret spring of affection has been touched. I entreat you to wait till he recovers. He will be better presently."

"He is better now," replied the miser, uncovering his face. "The fit is past; but it was sharp while it

Ralph Crew delivering the Packet to Mr. Scarre.

[illegible]

lasted. Randulph Crew," he added faintly, and stretching out his thin hand to him, "I am glad to see you. Years ago, I knew your father well. But unhappy circumstances separated us, and since then I have seen nothing of him. I fancied him alive, and well, and happy, and your sudden announcement of his death gave me a great shock. Your father was a good man, Randulph—a good man, and a kind one."

"He was, indeed, sir," rejoined the young man, in a broken voice, the tears starting to his eyes.

"But somewhat careless in money matters, Randulph—thoughtless and extravagant," pursued the miser. "Nay, I mean nothing disrespectful to his memory," he added, seeing the young man's colour heighten. "His faults were those of an over-generous nature. He was no man's enemy but his own. He once had a fine property, but I fear he dissipated it."

"At all events, he greatly embarrassed it, sir," replied Randulph; "and I lament to say that the situation of his affairs preyed upon his spirits, and no doubt hastened his end."

"I feared it would be so," said the miser, shaking his head. "But the estates were entailed. They are yours now, and unembarrassed."

"They might have been so, sir," replied the young man; "but I have foregone the advantage I could have taken of my father's creditors, and have placed the estates in their hands, and for their benefit."

"You don't mean to say you have been guilty of such incredible folly, for I can call it nothing

else!" cried the miser in a sharp and angry tone, and starting to his feet. "What! give the estates to the very men who ruined your father! Have you been rash and unadvised enough to break down the barriers the law had built around you for your protection, and let in the enemy into the very heart of the citadel? It is the height of folly—of madness!"

"Folly or not, sir," returned the young man haughtily, "I do not repent the step I have taken. My first consideration was to preserve the memory of my father unblemished."

"Unblemished!—pshaw!" cried the miser. "You would have cleared the spots from your father's name much more effectually if you had kept fast hold of the estates, instead of reducing yourself to the condition of a beggar."

"Father!" exclaimed Hilda uneasily—"father, you speak too strongly—much too strongly."

"I am no beggar, sir," replied Randulph, with difficulty repressing his anger; "nor will I allow such a term to be applied to me by you or any man. Farewell, sir." And he would have left the room, if he had not been detained by the imploring looks of Hilda.

"Well, then, you are reduced to the condition of a poor man, if you prefer the term—though I think it synonymous with that of beggar—and therefore must be a dependent one," said the miser, who seemed utterly reckless of the pain he was inflicting. "But for your own folly, you might now be worth three thousand a year—ay, three thousand a year!

—for I know your father's rental. Why, you are more thoughtless, more improvident than him who went before you. You have sold your birthright for less than a mess of pottage. You have sold it for a phantom, a shade, a word—and those who have bought it laugh at you, deride you. Out upon such folly! Three thousand a year gone to feed those birds of prey—those vultures—that ravened upon your father's vitals while living, and now riot upon his offspring—it's monstrous, intolerable! Oh! if I had left my affairs in such a condition, and my daughter were to act thus, I should not rest in my grave!"

"And yet, in such a case, I should act precisely as this gentleman has acted, father," rejoined Hilda.

"You speak like one ignorant of the world, and of the value of money, Hilda," cried the miser, turning to her. "Heaven be praised! you will never be in such a situation. I shan't leave you much—not much—but what I *do* leave will be unembarrassed. It will be your own, too; no husband shall have the power to touch a farthing of it."

"Have a care, father," rejoined Hilda, "and do not clog your bequest with too strict conditions. If I marry, what I have shall be my husband's."

"Hilda," cried the miser, shaking with passion, "if I thought you in earnest, I would disinherit you!"

"No more of this, dear father," she rejoined calmly; "I have no thought of marrying, and it is needless to discuss the point till it arises. Recollect, also, there is a stranger present."

"True," replied the miser, recovering himself. "This is not the time to talk over the subject, but I won't have my intentions misunderstood. And now," he added, sinking into the chair, and looking at Randulph, "let me inquire after your mother? I remember her well as Sophia Beechcroft, and a charming creature she was. You resemble her more than your father. Nay, restrain your blushes, I don't mean to flatter you. That which is a beauty in a woman is a defect in man; and your fair skin and long hair would become your sister, if you had one, better than yourself."

"Really, sir," rejoined Randulph, again reddening, "you make strangely free with me."

"I made free with your father before you, young man," rejoined the miser; "and it was for telling him a piece of my mind that I lost his friendship. More's the pity!—more's the pity! I would have served him if he would have let me. But to return to your mother. You acted unjustly to her, as well as to yourself, in not retaining the family estates."

"My mother has her own private property to live on," replied Randulph, who winced under the stinging observations of the miser.

"And what's that?" rejoined Mr. Scarve; "a beggarly—I crave your pardon—a pitiful hundred a year or so. Not that a hundred a year *is* pitiful; but it must be so for her, with her notions and habits."

"There you are mistaken, sir," replied Randulph; "my mother is entirely reconciled to her situation, and lives accordingly."

"I am glad to hear it," replied the miser, in a sceptical tone. "I own I did not give her credit for so much self-governance, but I hope it is so."

"Hope, sir!" cried Randulph angrily; "is my word doubted?"

"Not in the least," rejoined the miser drily; "but young people are apt to take things on trust. And now, as you have fooled away your fortune, may I ask what you are about to do to retrieve it? What profession—or, rather, what trade—do you propose to follow?"

"I shall follow neither trade nor profession, Mr. Scarve," replied Randulph. "My means, though small, enable me to live as a gentleman."

"Hum!" cried the miser. "I suppose, however, you would not object to some employment. An idle man is always an expensive man. But what brought you to London?"

"My chief motive was to deliver that packet to you," replied Randulph. "But I must own I was not altogether uninfluenced by a desire to see this great city, which I have never beheld since I was a mere boy, and too young to remember it."

"You are a mere boy still," rejoined the miser; "and if you will take my advice, you will go back more quickly than you came. But I know you won't, so it's idle to urge you. Youth will rush headlong to destruction. Young man, you don't know what is before you, but I'll tell you—it's ruin—ruin—ruin!—d'ye hear me?—ruin!"

"I hear you, sir," replied Randulph, frowning.

"Hum!" said the miser, shrugging his shoulders,

"so you won't be advised? But it's the way with all young people, and I ought not to expect you to prove an exception. I suppose you mean to stay with your two uncles, Abel and Trussell Beechcroft?"

"Such is my intention," replied Randulph.

"I have not seen them for years," pursued Scarve; "but if you are not acquainted with them, I will give you their characters in brief. Abel is sour, but sure; Trussell, pleasant, plausible, but hollow. And you will judge of my candour when I tell you that the first hates me, while the latter is well disposed towards me. You will take to the one and dislike the other, but you will find out your error in time. Mind what I say. And now let us look at the packet, for I have kept you here too long, and have nothing to offer you."

"There's nearly a glass of wine left in the bottle in the cupboard," interposed Jacob, who had stood stock still during the whole of this interview, with the candle in his hand. "Perhaps the gentleman would like it after his journey."

"Hold your tongue, sirrah," cried the miser sharply, "and snuff the candle—not with your fingers, knave!" he added, as Jacob applied his immense digits to the tufted wick, and stamped upon the snuff as he cast it on the floor. "What can this packet contain? Let me see," he continued, breaking the seal and disclosing a letter, which he opened, and found it contained a small memorandum. As he glanced at it a shade came over his countenance. He did not attempt to read

the letter, but folding it over the small piece of paper, unlocked a small strong box, that stood at his feet beneath the table, and placed them both within it.

"It is time you went to your uncles, young man," he said to Randulph in an altered tone, and more coldly than before; "I shall be glad to see you some other time. Good-night."

"I shall be truly happy to call here again, sir," replied Randulph, looking earnestly at Hilda.

"Jacob, show Mr. Crew to the door," cried the miser hastily.

"Good-night, Miss Scarve," said Randulph, still lingering. "Do you often walk in the parks?"

"My daughter never stirs abroad," replied the miser, motioning him away. "There, get you gone. Good-night, good-night! A troublesome visitor," he added to Hilda, as Jacob departed with the young man.

Jacob having again placed the candle in the lantern, unbolted and unlocked the door, and issuing forth, they found Peter Pokerich standing beside the horse.

"You may thank me that your horse is not gone, sir," said the latter. "People in London are not quite so honest as the villagers in Cheshire. Well, you've seen Mr. Scarve, I suppose, sir? What do you think of him, and of his daughter?"

"I pity your taste in not admiring her," replied Randulph.

"Not admiring her!" cried Jacob, with a hoarse laugh. "Did he tell you he didn't admire her?

Why, he's dying with love of her, and I make no doubt, was jealous of your good looks—ho! ho!"

"You're insolent, Mr. Jacob," rejoined Peter angrily.

"What! you want another taste of my crab-stick, do you?" said Jacob. "It's close at hand."

"Don't quarrel, friends," laughed Randulph, springing into the saddle. "Good-night, Jacob. I shall hope, ere long, to see your old master and young mistress again." So saying, he struck spurs into his steed, and rode off in the direction of Westminster Bridge.

"Well," said Peter, as he crossed over the way to his own dwelling, "I've managed to get a letter out of his saddle-bag, at all events. Perhaps it'll tell me who and what he is, and whether he's a Jacobite and Papist. If so, let him look to himself; for as sure as my name's Peter Pokerich, I'll hang him. And now for the letter."

III

The Brothers Beechcroft—Mr. Jukes—The Arrival—The walk in Saint James's Park—Randulph's Introduction to Beau Villiers and Lady Brabazon.

THE two brothers Beechcroft, Randulph's uncles, lived in a retired house in Lambeth, close to the river, and a little to the west of the palace. Both were middle-aged men—that is to say—for it is

difficult to determine what is the middle age now-a-days, though it was not quite so difficult to fix the period in the last century—one was fifty-six and the other ten years younger, and both bachelors. That they lived together, and in this retired way, was not so much matter of choice as of necessity on the part of the younger brother, Trussell, for he would have preferred, if it had been in his power, a gayer kind of life. But fortune decreed it otherwise. The father of the brothers was a wealthy merchant, who, being determined to make an elder son, left the bulk of his property, except some trifling bequests to his daughter Sophia (Randulph's mother) and Trussell, to his first-born, Abel. Abel, however, behaved very handsomely upon the occasion. He instantly made over to his brother and sister what he considered their rightful share of the property. In neither case did the gift prosper. Trussell soon squandered away his modicum in gaming and every other sort of extravagance, while Sophia's portion was dissipated, though in a different way, by her thoughtless and improvident husband. There are, indeed, so many ways of getting rid of money that it is difficult to say which is the most expeditious; nor would it be easy to tell whether Trussell or his sister was longest benefited by their brother's bounty. A small sum had been settled upon Mrs. Crew by her father, at the time of her marriage, and on this she now lived.

Completely reduced in circumstances, Trussell was thrown upon his brother, who very kindly

received him, but compelled him to live in his own quiet manner. This not suiting the more mercurial brother, he more than once tried to live on his own resources; but, failing in the attempt, he was compelled to come back to the old quarters. Now that age had somewhat calmed him, he was more reconciled to his situation. Having little money to spend, for his brother, of course, regulated his allowance, he could not indulge in any of the dearer amusements—he could neither play nor frequent the more expensive coffee-houses, clubs, theatres, opera, or other places of public entertainment, except on rare occasions. But he was daily to be seen sauntering on the Mall, or in Piccadilly; and as he had a tolerably extensive acquaintance with the *beau monde*, he was at no loss for society. The Cocoa Tree and White's were too extravagant for him—the Smyrna and the Saint James's too exclusively political—Young Man's too military—Old Man's too much frequented by stock-jobbers—and Little Man's by sharpers—so he struck a middle course, and adopted the British. This was during the day-time; but after the play, if by chance he went thither, he would drop into Tom's or Will's coffee-houses, to talk over the performance—to play a game at picquet—or to lose a half-crown at faro. But nothing would tempt him to risk even the smallest sum at hazard. The ordinaries he rarely attended—never, indeed, unless invited by a friend to dine with him at one of them.

Such was Trussell Beechcroft's daily routine. Perfectly well bred, of easy and polished manners,

good taste, and imperturbable temper, he was an acceptable companion everywhere, and it was a matter of surprise to all that he had not got on better in the world. Trussell was about the middle height, somewhat corpulent and short-necked, and had a round full face. He was by no means handsome, nor had he ever been so, but his features were decidedly prepossessing. He was scrupulously neat in his attire, and a little, perhaps, too attentive to personal decoration for an elderly gentleman; at least, his brother thought so.

Abel Beechcroft was a very different character. Some early disappointment in life, in a matter of the heart, it was reported, had soured his temper, and given a misanthropic turn to his mind. He mingled little with the world, and when he did so, it was only to furnish himself with fresh material for railing at its follies. He was a confirmed woman-hater, shunned the society of the sex, and never would see his sister after her marriage, because she had in some way or other, though in what was never disclosed, been connected with the bitterest event in his life. In person Abel was short, thin, and slightly deformed, having very high shoulders, almost amounting to a hump; and his neck being short, like his brother's, his large chin almost reposed upon his chest. His features were somewhat coarse, with a long prominent nose and pointed chin; but his broad massive forehead, and keen grey eyes, gave a great degree of intelligence to them, while his shrewd satirical expression redeemed them from anything like a commonplace character.

It has been said that he lived quietly, but he also lived very comfortably. Nothing could be more snug than his retreat at Lambeth, with its fine garden, its green-houses and hot-houses, its walls covered with fruit-trees, and its summer-house, with windows commanding the river, and frescoed ceiling, painted in the time of Charles the Second, at which epoch the house was built, and the garden laid out. Then he had some choice pictures of the Flemish school, two or three of Charles's beauties, undoubted originals, by Lely and Kneller, but placed in his brother's room, to be out of his own sight—an arrangement to which Trussell raised no objection; plenty of old china, and old japanned cabinets; a good library, in which the old poets, the old dramatists, and the old chroniclers, found a place; and, above all, a large cellar abundantly stocked with old wine. He was, in fact, by no means indifferent to good cheer, and enjoyed life, in his own way, with a keen zest. He had an old butler who managed all for him, for he would never suffer a female servant to come into his sight; and this person, Josiah Jukes, or as he was generally called, Mr. Jukes, was the only person that ever presumed to contradict him.

Abel Beechcroft, who had expected his nephew's arrival early in the day, and had, in fact, waited dinner for him—a compliment he very rarely paid to any one—became, as he did not appear, waspish and peevish to a degree that his brother's patience could hardly tolerate. He grumbled during the whole of dinner, which he declared was uneatable,

and, when the cloth was removed, began to find fault with the wine.

"This bottle is corked," he said, as he tasted the first glass; "all the fault of that boy. I wish I had never promised to receive him. I dare say some accident has happened to him. I hope it may turn out so."

"You don't hope any such thing, sir," remarked Mr. Jukes, a little, round, rosy, good-humoured-looking man, in a plain livery—"you don't hope any such thing, so don't belie yourself, and do your kind heart an injustice. The wine's not corked," he added, taking the bottle to the sideboard, and tasting it. "Try another glass. Your palate's out of order."

"And well it may be, Jukes," replied Abel, "for my digestion has been sadly disturbed by this waiting. Ah! I find I was mistaken," he added, tasting the glass poured out for him; "there *is* nothing the matter with the wine."

"On the contrary, sir, I think it an excellent bottle," remarked Trussell, "and I propose that we drink our worthy sister's good health—Heaven bless her! how much I should like to see her!—and her son's safe and speedy arrival."

"Come, sir, you cannot refuse that pledge," said Mr. Jukes, filling his master's glass. "I must drink it myself," he added, again carrying the bottle to the sideboard.

"Well, I wonder what we shall find Randulph like?" mused Trussell, "for we have not seen him since he was a little fellow not higher than

this table, when his poor father brought him to town."

"By the same token that his poor father borrowed two thousand pounds of me at the time, every farthing of which I lost," growled Abel.

"Well, well—no matter, sir. You never felt the loss, so what does it signify?" remarked Mr. Jukes.

"I've no doubt Randulph will be a very fine young man," pursued Trussell. "Sophia writes word that he is her exact image, and she was certainly the finest woman of her day."

"Ay, ay!" cried Abel, shrugging his shoulders uneasily. "Change the subject, brother — change the subject."

For some minutes there was a profound silence, which was at length broken by Abel.

"I suppose you mean to take this young lad, if he comes, to see all the sights, brother?" he remarked.

"Oh, of course, sir—of course," replied Trussell. "I must introduce him to the world—show him all the public places and public characters—and give him a slight taste of town life."

"Let it be *a very slight taste*, brother," rejoined Abel sharply, "and not enough to give him an appetite for such pernicious food. Our nephew must be perfectly unsophisticated, and I doubt not, from what I hear of him—and indeed, know of him —a youth of excellent principles. I think his conduct, in surrendering his estates to his father's creditors, noble. I have great hopes of him, and if

he turns out well, will take care he does not lose in the end, by his disinterestedness. But that depends upon himself, and in some degree on you."

"On me, sir!—how so?" asked Trussell.

"Thus," replied the elder brother—"thus; he is coming to town; you will give him certain introductions; these may turn out to his advantage—may raise him in society, in the world. If so, well and good. But if you only teach him to ape the follies and vices of those of a higher rank than himself—if you make him a weak and frivolous, and, perhaps, a vicious character—if, in short, you expose him to a test which he cannot bear, I cast him off, and will have nothing to do with him."

"And provided he answers your expectations, do you propose to leave him a fortune, sir, or to give him one?" inquired Trussell curiously.

"Why do you ask, brother—why do you ask?" demanded Abel, eyeing him narrowly from beneath his great bent brows.

"Nay, I only ask out of mere curiosity, sir," replied Trussell, seizing the bottle in some confusion. "I could have no other motive."

Abel coughed drily.

"I'll bring you more wine in a moment, gentlemen," interposed Mr. Jukes; "the bottle's empty, Mr. Trussell."

"So it is, Mr. Jukes," replied Trussell. "Well, I'll do my best, sir, to be a Mentor to him, and I hope I may succeed in carrying him through the fiery furnace unscathed. But you mustn't be too

hard upon him if he should be guilty of some slight indiscretion. You must recollect, sir, that we have been young ourselves; and that few men have their passions so much under control as yourself."

"I!" exclaimed Abel, with bitter contempt. "You are mocking me, brother. But go on."

"I've nothing more to add, sir," replied Trussell.

"Then I have," said Abel, in a low deep tone, and bending towards his brother. "Trussell, one word more on this subject, and I dismiss it. Whether I make my nephew my heir or not, will make no difference to you. What I have done, I have done, and I shall do no more. You can have no motive, therefore, for leading him astray."

"I am grieved you should think me capable of such a base design," replied Trussell, colouring deeply; "but I will take no offence at what you say. I know my own heart and intentions too well."

"I only gave you a hint, brother," replied Abel, chuckling. "I know that a shrewd man of the world—that is, a clever scoundrel—would act in such a way, and, if he succeeded, would be applauded for his conduct. I am glad you take the caution in good part."

Here Mr. Jukes opportunely entered with a fresh bottle of wine, which proved in admirable condition; and Abel having expended his ill-humour, the conversation was carried on in a much more agreeable manner for an hour, when both brothers adjourned to the garden, and smoked a

pipe in the summer-house. It was a charming evening; and the river, which was studded with boats, presented a lively and pleasant sight. As night drew on, however, Abel, in spite of himself, could not conceal his uneasiness.

"Something must have happened to the lad, Jukes," he said; "my mind misgives me. He has been robbed, and perhaps maltreated, by some of the highwaymen haunting Finchley Common."

"Poh! poh! don't make yourself uneasy," replied Mr. Jukes. "He'll be here presently, I'll warrant him. What has he to be robbed of?"

"Nothing much—that's certain," replied Abel. "But it is getting late. It must be near ten o'clock. He won't be even in time for supper."

"I've ordered supper to be kept back an hour, sir," said Mr. Jukes.

"The devil you have!" cried Abel angrily. "And do you think I'll submit to such an arrangement? Would you ruin my digestion, rascal? My stomach is as regular as clockwork. Serve it directly, sirrah!"

As Mr. Jukes departed to see his master's commands obeyed, he was agreeably surprised by a loud knocking at the outer door, and waddling thither, with the other servants, as fast as he could, was enchanted to find the summons proceeded from the expected guest. Randulph's horse was taken charge of, and he himself speedily ushered into the presence of his uncles, who both welcomed him warmly and affectionately—though Abel could not help mixing up with his greetings some reproofs

for his late arrival. Randulph explained that several delays had occurred to him on his journey, and concluded by an account of his visit to Mr. Scarve. At the mention of this name, Randulph observed both his uncles look extremely blank. Uncle Abel, in particular, seemed angry and disconcerted.

"You must never go near that house again," said the latter, at length, in an authoritative tone. "Mark me—on pain of my displeasure, I forbid it."

"Why so, uncle?" asked Randulph, who had been schooled by his mother to treat Abel with great deference.

"Don't ask me," replied Abel. "It is sufficient that I forbid you."

Randulph felt disposed to remonstrate, more especially as the figure of the beautiful Hilda rose before his recollection; but uncle Abel at that moment turning away, his sleeve was plucked by uncle Trussell, who whispered in his ear, "Don't disobey him, or you will mar your future fortunes."

Thus advised, the young man made no reply. Soon after this, supper was served. Many questions were put to his nephew by uncle Trussell respecting his sister, her state of health, and other matters, all of which were answered very satisfactorily. The time for parting, however, came, and Randulph was not sorry to retire. The only thing that dwelt in his mind, and clouded his satisfaction, was uncle Abel's peremptory interdiction against his visits

to the miser, and he felt he should have difficulty in observing it.

"It is strange," he thought, "that my mother should never have answered any of my inquiries respecting Mr. Scarve. She seemed as mysterious as my uncles. I don't much like the old miser. But the daughter is charming. Heigho! I must positively see her again, even if I incur uncle Abel's sovereign displeasure."

Next morning, the uncles and their nephew met at breakfast, at an early hour, when the subjects discussed on the previous night were renewed. Now that he had completely shaken off the fatigue of his journey, Randulph looked so handsome, that both his relations were greatly taken with him, and on the conclusion of some remark, uncle Abel said, as if unconsciously, "He is, indeed, very like his mother."

Some few hours were then spent by the young man in arranging his little wardrobe, and in looking out some letters which he had promised to deliver. He missed one, however, and after turning over every article he possessed more than a dozen times, concluded he had lost it. What made the matter more provoking was, that he could not recollect to whom it was addressed. As he had received it amongst others from his mother, to whom it had been committed by a friend, he mentioned its loss in a despatch which he proceeded to write to her, and also detailed his safe arrival, and the impressions made upon him by his uncles, and by the miser and his daughter, whose beauty he

highly extolled. His letter concluded, he went downstairs, and found both his uncles prepared for a stroll. Accordingly, they all three sallied forth, and, crossing Westminster Bridge, shaped their course towards Saint James's Park. As they passed the Little Sanctuary, Randulph could not help gazing towards the dungeon-like dwelling which enshrined her who had made so deep an impression upon him. Uncle Abel noticed his look, and partly divining the cause of it, said, "Remember what I told you. Disobey me, and you will rue it."

Randulph would have made some reply, but he was checked by a significant glance from uncle Trussell.

Passing through the Gate House, they entered the park by a small doorway at the end of Prince's Court. It was now noon, and a warm and genial day. The avenues of trees then extending between this point and Rosamond's Pond were crowded with persons of both sexes, and of all ranks, summoned forth by the fineness of the weather.

Amused by the scene, Randulph gazed with much curiosity at all presented to his view. Passing by the Decoy, the party skirted the great canal, and leaving Rosamond's Pond on the left, proceeded towards Buckingham House.

Just at this juncture, uncle Trussell caught sight of a gay party approaching, and exclaimed, in a joyful tone, to his nephew, "As I live, we are most fortunate! There is the leader of fashion, Beau Villiers, coming towards us. You shall know him,

nephew—you shall know him. The ladies he is walking with are Lady Brabazon and the Honourable Clementina Brabazon—a fine girl, Clementina—a remarkably fine girl; perfect in style and manners—quite a toast among the sparks. The old fellow at her side, Sir Singleton Spinke, was a great beau in his time, though never equal to Villiers, who far surpasses even his prototype, Beau Fielding, in style and taste. You shall know them all."

"And nice acquaintances you will make!" remarked uncle Abel sneeringly.

"Never mind him, Randulph," whispered uncle Trussell. "If you know this set, and they like you, you may know whom you please. Beau Villiers commands all society, from the highest down to—to——"

"Mr. Trussell Beechcroft," replied uncle Abel.

"Well, down to me, if you please," rejoined uncle Trussell, "and that shows it does not extend too low. But, Randulph, I beg you to look at the beau. Did you ever see a finer man?"

"He is very handsome, certainly," replied Randulph; "and remarkably well dressed."

"He is a great coxcomb, a great rake, and a great gamester, Randulph," said uncle Abel; "beware of him."

"Tush, never mind what he says," rejoined uncle Trussell, who really wished to have the éclat of introducing his handsome nephew to the beau. "Come along!"

So saying, he took his nephew's arm, and hurried

him forward. Pushing their way through the throng, they soon approached the sentry-box opposite Buckingham House, near which they encountered the party in question.

Beau Villiers, who was, indeed, a remarkably handsome man, and dressed in the extremity of the mode, wore a light blue embossed velvet coat, embroidered with silver, with broad cuffs similarly ornamented; a white waistcoat of the richest silk, likewise laced with silver; and tawny velvet breeches, partly covered with pearl-coloured silk hose, drawn above the knee, and secured with silver garters. His dress was completed by shoes of black Spanish leather, fastened by large diamond buckles, and a superb Ramillies periwig of the lightest flaxen hair, which set off his brilliant complexion and fine eyes to admiration. He carried a three-cornered hat, fringed with feathers, and a clouded cane, mounted with a valuable pebble.

Near the beau walked Lady Brabazon, a gorgeous dame of about five-and-forty, and still possessed of great personal attractions, which she omitted no means of displaying. She wore a hoop, and a white and silver satin sack. Struck by Randulph's figure at a distance, she had pointed him out to the beau, who thereupon vouchsafed to look towards him.

Behind Lady Brabazon came her daughter, Clementina, a very pretty and very affected blonde of two-and-twenty, with an excessively delicate complexion, fair hair, summer blue eyes, and a very mincing gait. She was exquisitely dressed in the last new mode, with a small escaloped lace cap, her

hair crisply curled at the sides, a triple row of pearls round her neck, and a diamond cross attached to the chain; and though she pretended to be interested in the discourse of the old knight, it was evident her regards were attracted by the handsome young stranger.

As to the old beau, he was, indeed, supremely ridiculous. He was attired in a richly embroidered cinnamon-coloured velvet coat, with fur cuffs of a preposterous size, each as large as a modern muff. His pantaloon legs were covered with pink silk hose; his wrinkled features were rouged and bepatched; and his wig was tied with a large bow, and had such an immense queue to it, that it looked as if a Patagonian dragon-fly had perched on the back of his neck. Lady Brabazon was attended by a little black page, in a turban and eastern dress, who had charge of her favourite lap-dog.

While uncle Abel drew on one side to allow the introduction to take place, and to witness it, uncle Trussell stepped forward, and, bowing obsequiously to Beau Villiers, pointed to Randulph, who stood on his right.

"Permit me," he said, "to introduce my nephew, Mr. Randulph Crew, to you, Mr. Villiers. He is fresh from the country. But even there, your reputation has reached him."

"I am happy to make his acquaintance," replied the beau, courteously returning Randulph's bow, and eyeing him curiously at the same time. "On my faith, your ladyship," he added aloud to Lady Brabazon, "the young man is not amiss, but

destroyed by his wretched equipments and rustic air."

"I really think something may be made of him," returned Lady Brabazon, in the same loud and confidential tone. "Mr. Trussell Beechcroft, introduce your nephew."

"With the greatest pleasure, your ladyship," replied Trussell, obeying her behest.

"Come with us," said Lady Brabazon to Randulph, after the ceremony had been gone through. "My daughter—Mr. Crew," she added, as they passed along. "By-the-bye, who was that strange old man I saw walking with you just now?"

"Who?" rejoined Randulph evasively, for he felt ashamed, he knew not why, of acknowledging his uncle.

"There he is," said Lady Brabazon, pointing her fan backwards; "he is staring hard at us, and looks exactly like a bailiff."

"It is my uncle Abel," replied Randulph, in some confusion.

"Your uncle Abel!" cried Lady Brabazon, with a scream of laughter. "Then the sooner you get rid of uncle Abel the better."

Abel could not hear the words, but he heard the laugh, saw the gesture, as well as his nephew's confusion, and knew that he was the object of it. He turned away in the opposite direction, muttering to himself as he went, "So, he has taken the first step."

IV

Abel Beechcroft's Sensibility—His Instructions to Mr. Jukes—A Second Nephew—The Loan—Mr. Cripps' Sense of Honour—The Bribe.

Uncle Abel returned home by himself about two o'clock, in a very ill humour indeed, and, vouchsafing no answer to Mr. Jukes, who smilingly inquired where he had left the two gentlemen, proceeded at once to the library. Knowing the peculiarity of his master's temper, the discreet butler left him to himself; but ventured, unsummoned, into his presence in about half-an-hour, and found him in the act of tearing up a letter, and throwing the fragments into the grate.

"What brings you here, sir?" cried Abel, turning sharply upon him. "I didn't ring the bell."

"I know you didn't, sir," replied Mr. Jukes; "but I was certain you wanted me, nevertheless."

"You were certain of no such thing, sirrah," rejoined Abel, in a tone that contradicted the asperity of his words, "and you presume too much on your long services."

"I don't presume too much on your kindness," rejoined Mr. Jukes, in accents oddly enough compounded of familiarity and respect. "I see plainly that something has gone wrong, and perhaps I may be able to set it right."

"Well, shut the door, Jukes," returned Abel, seating himself, "and put the window down—why was it left open?—you know I can't bear a draught. What do you think of my nephew?"

"That he's a remarkably fine young man, sir," replied the butler. "I haven't seen a handsomer man this many a day. And Mr. Trussell was quite right when he said he was like your sister. He's the perfect picture of her as she was when——"

"Never mind the likeness, Jukes," interrupted Abel hastily; "I don't want to know what you think of his good looks. They're obvious enough —too obvious by far—for, trust me, whatever you may think of the matter, it is a great misfortune in a man to be too handsome. What I wish to have is your opinion of his disposition."

"I think it equal to his good looks, sir," replied the butler promptly. "It will be strange indeed, if he doesn't turn out a fine character."

"Hum!" exclaimed Mr. Abel, with one of his sneers; "so that is your opinion, Mr. Jukes. I thought you a better judge."

"I see what you're driving at, sir," replied the butler; "but it won't answer with me. You're displeased with your nephew, and want me to disparage him; but I tell you plainly, I won't. And if I were foolish enough, and base enough to do so, no one would be more angry with me than yourself. I think Mr. Randulph a very fine young man, and a very promising young man; and I'm truly happy to find, since you're never likely to marry, that you'll have such a worthy successor."

Accustomed as he was to his master's fitful humours, Mr. Jukes was not prepared for the effect which his words produced, or he would have cut off his tongue sooner than have uttered them. Abel,

who was gazing at him fixedly as he commenced, cast down his eyes at the close of his speech, and pressed his hand convulsively to his brow. He remained silent for some moments, and then, giving vent to his suppressed respiration in a groan, walked to the window, and appeared to be looking out into the garden. Mr. Jukes allowed him to remain undisturbed for a few minutes, and then approached him.

"I'm extremely sorry for what I said, sir," he remarked penitentially; "I ought to have known better."

"You said nothing, Jukes," replied Abel sadly, yet kindly, "but what I ought to have heard unmoved, and I am ashamed of my own weakness. It is not because I shall go childless to the grave that I have exhibited this emotion, but because your allusion has opened old wounds, and brought the past too palpably and painfully before me. You know the secrets of my heart, and will understand what a train of emotion a chance word might awaken. I am an old man, Jukes—callous in feeling on most points—but there is one point on which I am as sensitive as ever. It is that disappointment — that blighting which I met with from—from—I cannot bring myself to utter her name. The wound I then received is incurable. I shall bear it to my dying day."

"I hope not, sir—I hope not," sympathised the butler.

"I hate the sex, Jukes!" cried Abel, almost fiercely. "There is no faith, no honesty in it—any more than there is true friendship in men. I

never yet knew a woman whom I could thoroughly esteem—nor a man on whose friendship I could entirely rely. If I could make an exception in the latter case, it would be in favour of yourself."

"And if a servant was ever true to his master, I am true to you, sir," replied Mr. Jukes earnestly. "But you expect too much from human nature. Our imperfect condition is to blame, not ourselves. In my opinion, there are more true-hearted women than the reverse; and I should be sorry to think otherwise. But if you search the world over for one who could come up to your notions of perfection, I fear you would not find her. The best of women have some faults, and the worst many redeeming qualities. But with all their faults they are the best part of creation. So at least I think, and so you would think too, sir, if your choice had not been so unhappily fixed."

"Do not advert to it again, Jukes," cried Abel, repressing a pang.

"I've done, sir—I've done!" rejoined Mr. Jukes hastily. "And now may I venture to ask what has displeased you with your nephew?"

"Perhaps I ought not to be angry with him," replied Abel; "but I watched him closely during his introduction to Beau Villiers and Lady Brabazon on the Mall this morning, and saw that he was completely dazzled by them. Nay, I clearly detected, by certain looks and gestures that passed between him and Lady Brazen, for such should be her title, that she put him to the blush about his relationship to me. I do not blame him for this, because I know what effect appearances have upon young

persons, and how difficult it is to understand real worth when set against the glitter of rank and fashion, however worthless or vicious the latter may be. I do not blame him, I say, but I lament that he did not bear his first trial better."

"You should blame Lady Brabazon, not him, sir," rejoined Mr. Jukes. "Some ladies of her rank have a way of abashing modest young men, and delight in doing it. And then I'm sure I may tell you, without offence, that your dress is scarcely becoming your real station in life. No, sir, I don't wonder Mr. Randulph felt a little embarrassed. I may just as well complain of my graceless nephew, Crackenthorpe Cripps, who serves Mr. Villiers, the very gentleman you've mentioned. The rascal will never own me if he meets me in the Park, though he's extremely glad to call me 'nunks,' and wheedle me out of a crown at other times. But what do I care for his impertinence? Nothing at all."

"Well, Jukes, perhaps you are right," said Abel, after a moment's reflection; "and perhaps I am guilty of as much weakness as my nephew himself, in feeling hurt by the matter. I had written to his mother on the subject; but I have just destroyed the letter."

"I am glad to hear it, sir," replied Mr. Jukes.

"And now there is another point about which I feel considerable uneasiness," pursued Abel. "Randulph, as you know, has seen Hilda Scarve; and, short as the interview was, it was long enough it seems for her to produce a strong impression upon him. Now," he continued, sternly and emphatically,

"he never shall marry that girl, with my consent!—never, Jukes! And if he should marry her, he never shall have a shilling of mine. I have forbidden him to visit the house; but I am apprehensive he will disobey my injunctions. If he goes there without my knowledge, I will shut my doors against him."

"If you do so, you will act very harshly, and very unjustly, sir," replied Mr. Jukes; "and so I tell you beforehand."

"The fault will be his own," rejoined Abel coldly. "I have warned him. It must be your part to see Jacob Post, if the fellow is still with the miser, and ascertain whether Randulph visits the house. D'ye understand?"

"Perfectly," replied Jukes; "but I don't like the job."

"Like it or not, you will do as I bid you," continued Abel peremptorily. "And you have not received the whole of your instructions. You say that your nephew serves Mr. Villiers. Bribe him to bring word what Randulph does in his master's society; whether he games, drinks, or riots—in a word, how he goes on."

"There will be no necessity to bribe Crackenthorpe to tell all this," returned Mr. Jukes. "But, I repeat, I don't like such underhand proceedings. They're unworthy of you."

"It is the only way of arriving at the truth," replied Abel. "And now leave me. I must write to my sister about this Scarve—curse on the name—and will desire her to interdict her son from going near the house."

"In my humble opinion you are taking the precise course to attract him thither, sir," rejoined Mr. Jukes. "If he never desired to go before, he will do so now. It's human nature, sir. Tell me not to open that cupboard, and I should long to do it. Recollect Bluebeard, sir."

"Bluebeard be hanged!" cried Abel angrily. "Go and look after dinner. Serve it at four to a moment. I won't wait an instant for them—not an instant."

The butler bowed and retired, while Abel commenced a second letter to his sister.

As Mr. Jukes approached the butler's pantry, whither he repaired after quitting his master, he was startled by hearing a voice issue from it, singing with some taste, but in a very affected style, the following snatch:—

"I have been in love, and in debt, and in drink,
This many and many a year;
And these are three plagues, enough, I should think,
For one poor mortal to bear."

"There's my rascally nephew, Crackenthorpe," muttered Mr. Jukes. "I won't see him. He's come upon his old errand."

Here the singer again exalted his voice:—

"There is nothing but money can cure me,
And rid me of all my pain;
'Twill pay all my debts and remove all my lets,
And my mistress, that cannot endure me,
Will love me, and love me again.
Fal de ral."

"Ay, money's always the burden of his song," muttered Mr. Jukes. "However, I must see

him, I suppose. My master's orders are peremptory."

With this he pushed open the door, and discovered his nephew leaning in a very careless attitude against the table. Mr. Crackenthorpe Cripps was a young man of about three-and-twenty, of very dissipated appearance, with a slim, well-proportioned figure, and tolerably good features, only marred by an expression of cunning and assurance. He was dressed in a cast-off suit of his master's, and, being precisely the same height, and nearly the same make, as the renowned beau, his clothes fitted him remarkably well. He would scarcely have been taken for a valet, for in defiance of the regulations against the wearing of offensive weapons by footmen, then somewhat strictly enforced, from the quarrels arising among those gentry, he carried a silver-hilted sword. His coat was of scarlet, trimmed with gold somewhat tarnished, but still presenting a sufficiently gay appearance; his waistcoat of green flowered silk; his breeches of yellow velvet; his cravat was laced; and the queue of the wig was left unfastened, allowing the hair to float negligently over his shoulders, to add, no doubt, to the rakish air he affected. A clouded cane, with a large silken tassel, completed his equipment. From his air, his dress, and his pretensions this coxcomb was known amongst his fraternity as Beau Cripps—a title of which he was not a little vain, and strove to support. On seeing his uncle, the valet did not alter his position, but contented himself with waving his hand condescendingly to him.

"How are ye, nunks?" he said. "Give you the *bon jour*, as we bucks say. Sweet old soul, how I love thee. 'Pon rep! 'tis a pleasure rather than a duty to visit thee."

"I beg you'll never put yourself to any trouble on my account, nephew," replied Mr. Jukes, somewhat testily; "and I must request, whenever you visit this house in future, that you'll bear in mind the situation I hold in it. Amuse yourself with your opera ballads elsewhere."

"Cudslid, nunks?" cried Mr. Cripps, "you are far more particular than the Duke of Doncaster's gentleman himself. Why, I do what I like when I visit him."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Mr. Jukes; "but you shan't do what you like here, I promise you."

"Devil take me, if I ever heard a better jest," cried Mr. Cripps, forcing a laugh; "but you were always a wit, nunks. Try my snush. You'll find it excellent. It's the beau's own mixture, 'pon rep!"

"And the beau's own box, I'll be sworn, nephew," replied Mr. Jukes, helping himself to a pinch. "Well," he added, somewhat mollified by the attention, "will you take anything after your walk?"

"Walk, nunks!" echoed Mr. Cripps, with a look of supreme contempt. "Do you think I would walk while there was a conveyance to be had? No; a coach and a pair of sculls brought me hither. But since you press me, I don't mind a glass of Bordeaux, or Rhenish. I know old Abel has a prime cellar, so suppose we tap a flask. Mrs.

Nicholson, our housekeeper, persuaded me to swallow a cup of green tea before I left home, and plague on't! it has shattered my nerves sadly."

"It's the punch you swallowed last night that has shattered your nerves, nephew, and not the tea," rejoined Mr. Jukes, shaking his head. "I can't give you claret, or hock, but if a glass of ale would sit well on your stomach——"

"A glass of ale!" repeated Mr. Cripps, with infinite disgust. "Faugh! I'll none of it. And as to punch, know, O ignorant nunks! that the liquors quaffed by me last night were champagne, burgundy, and hermitage. Thou starest, but 'tis a fact, 'pon rep!

"Let us drink and be merry,
Dance, joke, and rejoice,
With claret and sherry,
Theorbo and voice.

"The changeable world
To our joy is unjust;
All treasure's uncertain,
So down with your dust.

Apropos of 'dust,' it was on that very subject I came hither. I want you to post the cole, nunks—to come down with the rhino—to disburse."

"I guessed your errand, Crackenthorpe," replied Mr. Jukes. "You've been gaming, sirrah!"

"Why, i'faith, nunks, I must confess to a trifle lost at picquet to the duke's gentleman," replied Mr. Cripps.

"What do you call a trifle, eh, nephew?" inquired Mr. Jukes.

"Why—why—" hesitated Mr. Cripps, applying to the snuff-box, and endeavouring to carry off his embarrassment by additional assurance—"twenty crowns—not a farthing more, 'pon rep!"

"Twenty crowns!" exclaimed Mr. Jukes, raising his hands in unfeigned astonishment. "A valet drink champagne and burgundy, and lose twenty crowns at picquet! What will the world come to!"

"No sermonising, nunks," replied Mr. Cripps, "but down with the dust, as I said before. What will you let me have?"

"A crown, if it will rid me of you!" rejoined Mr. Jukes impatiently.

"Devil take me if I stir without ten crowns!" replied Mr. Cripps. "Therefore, if you desire my absence, you will come down at once. Ten, by this light—ten."

"Well, anything to get rid of you," replied Mr. Jukes; "but this is the last advance I'll ever make."

"So you always say, nunks," laughed the valet; "but I'll refund it in a week, 'pon rep!"

"I don't expect it," rejoined Mr. Jukes, unlocking a cupboard, and opening a drawer within it, from which he took ten crown pieces. "Remember, these are my savings, nephew."

"And you couldn't apply them to a better purpose than in assisting your sister's son," returned the valet, coolly pocketing the money. "*Mille remercimens!*—shan't forget the favour, 'pon rep! But I've trespassed too much on your time. *Au revoir!* I kiss your hand, nunks."

"Not so fast, Crackenthorpe," replied Mr. Jukes.

"You must do me a service in return for my loan. My master's nephew, Mr. Randulph Crew, has just been introduced to Mr. Villiers; and my master fears, and with reason, that this introduction will lead to little good. But, be that as it may, you must bring me accurate information of all their proceedings."

"Rely upon knowing everything, nunks," replied Mr. Cripps.

"I haven't done yet," pursued Mr. Jukes. "There is a certain Mr. Scarve who lives in the Little Sanctuary——"

"What, the miser whom folks nickname Starve?" interrupted Cripps. "I know him. My master has borrowed large sums of money from him. But what of him, nunks?"

"Why, I wish to ascertain whether Mr. Randulph ever visits the house—that's all," rejoined Mr. Jukes.

"What! old Abel is afraid of his nephew borrowing money, eh?" replied Mr. Cripps, laughing. "Well, that can be easily managed. A perruquier whom I patronise—Peter Pokerich by name—lives opposite old Starve's dwelling, and I must know his servant, if he keeps one; if not, I must know the miser himself. I'll get what you want from him never fear. Any further commands," he added cocking his hat jauntily, and gracefully twirling his cane, preparatory to his departure.

Before Mr. Jukes could reply, the door was opened, and Abel Beechcroft entered the room. He stared so sternly at Mr. Cripps, that the confident

of the latter completely deserted him, and hastily taking off his hat, he would have retreated if Abel had not stopped him.

"What are you doing here, rascal?" he asked.

"Only come to see my uncle, 'pon rep, Mr. Beechcroft!" stammered the valet.

"Only come to rob him of his gains, knave, you mean," rejoined Abel sarcastically. "But, hark ye, sirrah! I, like my butler, have a plague of a nephew, and he has just become acquainted with your master —your foppish, rakish, gambling master—and I cannot hope will escape the taint of such infectious society. Now, I want to know how quickly, and to what extent, he becomes corrupted by it. You must play the spy upon him, fellow."

"My uncle has told me your request, Mr. Beechcroft," rejoined Mr. Cripps; "but really, 'pon rep! if you put the matter in such an objectionable light —if you term it 'playing the spy'—I cannot consistently with my—my rep-rep-reputation, comply with your request."

"What, you are scrupulous, eh, rascal?" laughed Abel derisively, "and affect as nice a sense of honour as your master? But, like him, you have your price. Bring me the information I require, and you shall have double the sum, whatever it may be, out of which you have just cajoled your uncle."

"That will be twenty crowns, Mr. Beechcroft," replied Mr. Cripps. "You're a shrewd judge of human nature, sir, 'pon rep! and have discovered my weak point. No Cripps was ever proof against a bribe."

"Then the bargain is concluded," replied Abel impatiently. "See him out of the house, Mr. Jukes. And then let this letter be taken to the post. Ah! I hear my brother's and my nephew's voices in the hall. Point out Mr. Randulph to your nephew, Jukes."

The butler nodded, and departed with the valet, while Abel returned to the library. Trussell and Randulph were talking and laughing in the hall. On seeing Mr. Cripps, the former instantly directed his nephew's attention to him.

"As I live," he cried, "there is Beau Villiers' gentleman, Mr. Cripps. You must know him, Randulph. It is not amiss to be on terms, even with the servants of the great. Mr. Cripps, a word with you. There's a bow, Randulph—the true diving bow, bringing the hair before, with the proper water-spaniel shake afterwards, to restore it to its place. Then did you ever see such a wig, such a cravat, or such a sword-knot?"

"Never on a footman, unquestionably," replied Randulph.

"Mr. Cripps," continued Trussell, "this is my nephew, Mr. Randulph Crew, a young gentleman new to the world, as I need scarcely tell you. He has just been presented to your master, and, I flatter myself, has already won his regards."

"Delighted to hear it, Mr. Trussell—delighted," replied Mr. Cripps, with another diving bow—"but not surprised. Fine young man, 'pon rep! and only wants the *je ne scais quoi* air, which my master will speedily impart to him, to be perfect.

Egad, my master must look to his laurels, Mr. Trussell, or your nephew may rob him of 'em—ha! ha! Condescend to try my snush, sir? It's the beau's mixture, with a slight improvement of my own."

"Thankye, thankye, Mr. Cripps," said Trussell, plunging his fingers into the proffered box.

"What is it to be to-night, sir?" inquired Mr. Cripps—"the ridotto at Ranelagh, the French play at the Haymarket, or Lady Fazakerly's drum?"

"I'faith, I don't know," replied Trussell, a little embarrassed. "The truth is," he added, in an undertone, "my brother is rather strait-laced. He has prejudices to which we must occasionally succumb."

Mr. Cripps smiled significantly, and regaled his nostrils with a very large pinch of snuff.

"You'll take care of my nephew's interest with your master, Mr. Cripps," whispered Trussell, slipping a crown at the same time into his hand.

"As of my own, Mr. Trussell, 'pon rep!" replied Mr. Cripps in the same tone.

With this, he inclined his person almost to the ground, and departed.

"Well, I've made a tolerable thing of it to-day, 'pon rep!" he muttered to himself, as he whisked out of the house. "Done nunks out of ten crowns—got the promise of twenty from old Abel—received one from Trussell. This Randulph Crew seems to bring me good luck. On my way home I'll call on the little barber—put him on the miser's scent. Something is to be made of this, I perceive. To-

night I shall try my hand at the dice-box at the Duke's.

> "My fortune, I hope, is reserved for this cast,
> To make me a saver for all my life past;
> Be lucky this once, dice! 'tis all I implore,
> I'll reform then entirely, and tempt you no more."

In this way he went on soliloquising and singing till he reached his boat, which lay off the stairs near the palace, and, jumping into it, ordered the waterman, with the air of a lord, and several very fashionable imprecations, to row to Parliament Stairs.

V

Abel again cautions his Nephew against the Miser's Daughter.

Uncle Abel did not join his nephew and brother till dinner was served, and took little part in the conversation that occurred during the meal. Habituated to his humours, Trussell was as lively and amusing as ever, and rattled away like a young man; but Randulph could not help being oppressed by his elder uncle's grave looks. He also felt, he scarcely knew why, dissatisfied with himself, and wished to regain Abel's esteem. Thus the dinner passed off; the cloth was removed, and the wine placed on the board. The glasses were filled by the attentive Mr. Jukes, who took especial care that on this occasion one of the oldest and choicest bottles should be brought forth, and his attention was

speedily rewarded by a very beneficial change in his master's temper.

"Well, Randulph," said Abel, while sipping his second glass, "how do you like your new society?"

"I have seen so little of it at present, sir," replied the young man, "that I can form no precise opinion; but I must say, that I think Mr. Villiers the best bred man I have ever met with, Lady Brabazon a woman of infinite spirit and wit, and her daughter Clementina——"

"The most beautiful creature you ever beheld!" supplied Abel, laughing drily; "and you have already lost your heart to her."

"So far from thinking her the most beautiful creature I ever beheld," returned Randulph, "she is not to compare with—with——"

He was about to add the name of the miser's daughter, but the looks of his uncles, both of which were fixed on him, though with a very different expression, checked him.

"I know what you are about to say, Randulph," observed uncle Abel sternly; "you were going to mention Hilda Scarve. Once for all, let me caution you against alluding to her. I have a particular reason for disliking her father—for hating him, indeed, for my feelings towards him are of the bitterest kind, and I cannot endure to hear of any one connected with him."

"Well, sir, your wishes shall be obeyed, so far as it is in my power to obey them," replied Randulph; "but I should not be dealing frankly with you, if I did not tell you that I think them a little unreason-

able. I can easily understand that Mr. Scarve may have offended you, but his daughter——"

"Randulph," cried Abel, fixing his grey eye upon him, "you are in love with that girl, or rather, you fancy yourself so; for love, though sown at once, requires time to bring it to maturity. You must subdue this passion, if you entertain it. The daughter of such a man must inherit some of his bad qualities."

"There I think you are unjust, sir," rejoined Randulph. "And, grant that the father may be objectionable, the mother, whom she evidently takes after, may have been——"

"Randulph!" exclaimed Abel, interrupting him with a sharp cry, "would you drive me mad?"

"What have I said, sir?" asked the young man in astonishment.

"For Heaven's sake, hold your tongue!" whispered uncle Trussell, who had in vain been endeavouring to attract his nephew's attention. "Don't you see he can't bear to talk of these Scarves?"

Randulph was greatly disconcerted. In vain he tried to rally; no subject for conversation occurred to him. But at last uncle Trussell came to his relief.

"We are going to breakfast with Beau Villiers to-morrow morning, sir," he said to his brother. "We were asked to Lady Fazakerly's drum to-night; and Lady Brabazon invited us to accompany her to Ranelagh."

"And why didn't you go?" asked Abel peevishly.

"Because, sir, I thought it might not be agreeable to you," returned Trussell.

"Pshaw! what [illegible] about it," rejoined Randolph. "Plunge your thoughts over head and ears in dissipation! Surfeit him as he grows up with all sensual practices with women. Never mind the [illegible] let him what you will."

Uncle Trussel [illegible]

"We'll take him as he [illegible]" he [illegible]

But Randolph [illegible] His heart was [illegible] and he felt a [illegible] could not conquer. Ere long, [illegible] more wine, he repaired to the garden, and [illegible] the summer-house, where he gazed at the [illegible] beautiful river flowing past it, and the [illegible] Abbey on the opposite [illegible] whom he now began to [illegible] of his heart.

VI

The Miser and Jacob—A Tiny Kingdom—A Dinner at the Miser's—Hilda's Opinion of her Cousin

NOTHING very particular occurred in the miser's dwelling after Randolph's departure. Mr. Vane took a large account-book from the [illegible] table, together with several papers from which he proceeded to make extracts; and he [illegible] himself for more than an hour and a half, when the farthing candle having burnt down, the miser he intimated to his daughter and Mrs. Wilson that it was time to retire to rest.

"You have sat up longer than usual," he said, "and I have been so busy that I quite forgot to bid you to go to bed. Hilda, your cousin, Philip Frewin, will dine here to-morrow."

"You have told me that before, sir," she replied coldly.

"And I have told you also, that it is my wish you should receive him graciously," rejoined the miser. "Don't say a word more on the subject. Good-night, daughter—good-night, sister Clinton. Here, Jacob, light the ladies upstairs! I have settled my accounts, and don't want the candle."

Jacob obeyed, and the ladies were conducted to their room, to retire to rest, as usual, in the dark.

A moment afterwards, Jacob returned, and set the expiring candle on the table.

"Well, Jacob," said the miser to him, "what did you think of our visitor to-day?"

"What did *you* think of him, sir?" returned Jacob evasively.

"Pretty well," replied Mr. Scarve. "Not wanting in good looks—but improvident—thoughtless in the extreme."

"Don't think so," rejoined Jacob gruffly.

"You're no judge of character," rejoined the miser sharply. "I read the spendthrift in his whole appearance and demeanour. In short, Jacob, I would rather see no more of him. If he *should* call again, which is not unlikely, though I gave him a broad enough hint that his visits would be anything but agreeable, you will deny me and my daughter to him."

"What!" exclaimed Jacob, "do you mean to shut your doors against the son of your old friend? Is that acting like a gentleman, let alone a Christian?"

"The lad is a scapegrace, Jacob—a senseless, romantic scapegrace," rejoined the miser.

"Don't think so," replied Jacob.

"He has given away his fortune," said the miser.

"He'll get it back in time," was the rejoinder.

"Jacob, you're a fool!" said the miser.

"Fool or not," replied Jacob, "if I were you, I would marry my daughter to that young man."

"When I ask your advice on the subject, it will be time enough to offer it," rejoined the miser. "You may now retire, Jacob. But first go over the house and see that all's safe. I thought I heard a noise in the cellar last night."

"It was the rats, sir," replied Jacob.

"Indeed!" replied the miser; "then the rats make a pretty chattering with their jaws. Jacob, I suspect it was you."

"Well, then, it *was* me," replied Jacob doggedly.

"Oh! you confess it?" replied the miser uneasily. "Where do you get your victuals from? Who supplies you with them, eh?"

"Never you mind, sir," replied Jacob; "so as it doesn't cost you anythin', you needn't care."

"True, true!" said the miser; "but yet I should like to know how you get your food."

"I don't steal it," replied Jacob. "But see, the candle's goin' out—you had better go to bed."

"You're right, Jacob," said the old man. "Good-night! Be sure you look to the house."

With this he crept off to his own chamber, and, just as he reached it, the candle expired.

Mr. Scarve always rose at daybreak, and generally spent two or three hours before breakfast at his accounts. On the morning following the events previously related, he remained longer than usual in his own room, and when summoned to breakfast by Mrs. Clinton at nine o'clock, he descended with a large deed under his arm. The family breakfast consisted of milk and water, the proportions being one-third of the former liquid to two of the latter—a small loaf of bread, but neither butter nor meat. Of this meagre fare all parties partook sparingly, and the meal was soon ended. Hilda had generally little appetite, but on this occasion she ate less than usual, and her father remarked it.

"I fear you are not well to-day," he said; "I am sorry for it, for I wished you to be in good looks to receive your cousin."

"I have no wish to see him," she replied, with a look of inexpressible disgust.

"Then you have no wish to please me," he rejoined.

The miser made no further remark at the time, but when the scanty remains of breakfast were removed, and he was left alone with his daughter, he said: "Hilda, I want a word with you. I have long desired to converse with you on a subject nearest my heart. It relates to your cousin, Philip Frewin. You can scarcely be ignorant that he seeks your hand. But if you are ignorant of his intentions, I must now acquaint you with them. I

have a very high opinion of him, not merely because he is my nephew, but because he is a very prudent careful person, and will take care of what he has got. He is directly the reverse of the weak young man who was here last night."

"So he appears, sir," replied Hilda significantly.

"Philip is very rich, Hilda," pursued the miser; "he is worth fifty thousand pounds, if he is worth a penny. And, in short, it is my pleasure, if he *should* propose to you, as I expect he will, that you accept him."

"Then it is fit, dear father, that you should know what my answer will be to his proposal," she replied.

"What will it be?" asked the miser.

"A positive and decided refusal," she returned.

"Hilda!" exclaimed the miser furiously "Hilda!"

"Do not urge me further, father," she rejoined calmly; "upon this point I am firm."

"You are captivated by the fair face and showy figure of the prodigal who was here last night," cried Mr. Scarve, carried away by his passion, "but, mark me, I will never consent to such a match. If you wed him, neither he nor you, nor any child or children of yours, shall ever have a penny of mine! I'll disinherit you all! He is a beggar, and a beggar's wife you shall be. If the fool had but kept fast hold of the sixteen, all might have been well—I might have consented, but, as it is, I will never listen to his suit. Mark, Hilda," he continued, moderating himself, "the husband for you

is Philip Frewin, my sister's son—one who knows the value of money, and will take care of it—one who hates extravagance in all ways. I can commend him as a thoroughly well-principled, well-conducted young man."

"He may be all you describe—though I doubt it," she replied; "but I do not desire to marry."

"Tush!" rejoined the miser impatiently—"every woman desires to marry. It is her first object—what she is brought up for—the end and aim of her existence."

"But surely, father," replied Hilda, with a half smile, "every woman desires to marry the man she loves. Her heart must have something to do with her choice."

"Pshaw!" cried the miser, "mere idle talk—mere girl's fancy. Before you have been married a week you will love your husband better than any man in the world. A husband should not be chosen for his good looks, but for his good qualities; for his pecuniary rather than his personal advantages; and for his ability to take care of you, your property, and your children. Such a one is Philip Frewin—such a one is *not* Randulph Crew."

"I wish you would not mention Randulph Crew so often, father," replied Hilda, in some little confusion. "I do not understand why his name should be brought forward."

"Nor I," rejoined the miser; "and I'll take care not to mention it again. But enough has been said on the subject. You know my wishes; don't dispute them. Go to your chamber, child; go to

your chamber!" And he turned away from her to pore over the deed before him. Hilda gazed at him for a moment, irresolutely, and then sighing deeply, withdrew.

A guest being expected to dinner, some little preparation was made. The repast was to consist of a few ribs of beef baked upon half-a-dozen potatoes, followed by a small batter pudding, likewise baked.

Punctually at two o'clock, at which hour the miser dined, a knock was heard at the door, and Jacob, answering the summons, admitted a tall, thin young man, with very sharp features, dressed in an old worn-out grey cloth coat, with plated metal buttons, that might have belonged to his grandfather; a tattered plush waistcoat; darned worsted hose; a scratch wig, looking as if it had been picked up in the kennel; and old shoes, with high quarters fastened by small iron buckles. This extraordinary personage was welcomed with great cordiality by his uncle, who seemed to contemplate his miserable appearance with the utmost satisfaction.

Hilda, however, would scarcely behave civilly to him, though the young man paid her great attention, and whenever her father's back was turned, put on a manner that filled her with disgust. At the close of dinner, the miser called for wine, and a bottle was brought him, containing barely a glass, as was proved when Jacob poured it out. Mr. Scarve pressed his nephew to take it, but the young man declined. The miser then raised the glass to his

lips, but put it down untasted, observing: "No, I don't require it—indeed, I am better without it. Put it back again, Jacob. I drink your health, nephew, in a glass of water."

"And I return the pledge in the same wholesome beverage," returned Philip Frewin. "I never take any other, sir," he added, ogling Hilda in an intolerable manner. "I drink to you, fair cousin," and as he spoke he gulped down a large draught, but with a very bad grace.

"I don't think, for all he says, that he's accustomed to such draughts," thought Jacob. "He doesn't look like a water-drinker."

Dinner was no sooner over than Hilda withdrew with her aunt to her own room; nor would she, though her father sent Jacob to summon her, return.

"Girls have strange fancies, Philip," he said to his nephew. "Her mother was just as whimsical. I don't think, though she married me, that she cared for me."

"Since I have your consent to the match, sir, that is all I care for," replied Philip. "Love will come in good time. My cousin Hilda is a charming girl, and would be a prize without a penny, but with what you propose to give her——"

"To leave her, Philip—to leave her—not to give her!" interrupted the miser hastily. "I shall give her nothing during my lifetime."

"Not make any settlement?" asked Philip uneasily.

"None whatever," replied the miser; "but I

shall require a settlement on your part. You are rich, Philip, and can make a good settlement."

"No settlement on your part, uncle!" muttered Frewin, "and a large one demanded on mine! This requires consideration."

"No, it doesn't," said the miser sharply; "for, if you hesitate, you shan't have her. My daughter shall not be refused by any man, even by my sister's son. You shall take her on my terms, or not at all."

"I will gladly take her so, uncle," replied Philip.

"You will do wisely," rejoined the miser more calmly. "And now I have good news for you, Phil—rare news! You know—for our attorney, Diggs, will have told you—that I have advanced fourteen thousand pounds to Sir Bulkeley Price on the mortgage of one of his estates in Flintshire. Now, the estate is worth upwards of twenty thousand pounds—perhaps more, because there are several copper mines upon it. Well, I have given Sir Bulkeley notice to pay over the money. He has paid no attention to the application; and if I do not receive the money at six o'clock, at which hour it must be paid or tendered, I shall foreclose—yes, foreclose, nephew—and the estates will become mine—your wife's hereafter, and your children's."

"And *mine*," thought Philip. "I sincerely congratulate you, uncle," he added aloud, "and hope nothing may happen to deprive you of your rights."

"Nothing is likely to happen now, Philip," replied Mr. Scarve. "The estate is as good as my own—I have just been reading over the description

rest quite easy," she replied. "And do not suppose I speak from any feeling of prejudice, but I think you are deceived in my cousin."

"Deceived, Hilda! In what way?" asked the miser.

"By his apparent carefulness—by the manner in which he seems to adapt himself to your notions and peculiarities," she replied. "Recollect, too, that owing to circumstances, you have seen and known so little of him, that, but for the fact of his being your nephew, he might be an entire stranger. Forgive me, sir, if I say you are not acting in this case with your usual caution. You trust too much to Philip's own representations."

"You think so," said the miser—"but you are wrong. I have made inquiries through one who would not deceive me—my attorney, Mr. Diggs—and I am assured that Philip is the most careful person breathing."

"I hope you don't except yourself," muttered Jacob.

"In fact, I hear nothing but good of him from Diggs," pursued the miser, not choosing to notice the remark; "and what is better, I know—for I have seen the will—that his father left him fifty thousand pounds—fifty thousand pounds, Hilda!—twenty of which he shall settle on you."

"Do not suffer this notion to get possession of you, I entreat, dear father," she replied. "If he had a million of money, I would never marry Philip Frewin."

Here Mrs. Clinton, who had in vain endeavoured

to throw in a word, interposed, and engaged Hilda in conversation. The miser referred to his mortgage-deed; and the description of the estate, which he looked upon as his own, restored him to good temper.

VII

The Payment of the Mortgage Money.

NEARLY an hour having elapsed, Mr. Scarve arose, and called to Jacob, who had retired to the cellar. The summons not being answered as expeditiously as he desired, he called again, and Jacob made his appearance brushing the moisture from his lips, and trying to swallow down a huge morsel that stuck in his throat.

"You have been eating, rascal!" cried the miser, "and drinking, too! Faugh! how the knave smells of beer!"

"If I have been eatin' and drinkin'," said Jacob, clearing his throat by a violent effort, "it hasn't been at your expense."

"Well, go and see what's o'clock," said the miser, who did not appear particularly angry.

"What's o'clock!" exclaimed Jacob, with surprise. "Why, I've lived with you these twenty years, and never was sent on such a message before. What do you want to know what's o'clock for?"

"What's that to you, sirrah?" rejoined the miser, with more anger in his words than in his tones or looks. "But I'll tell you this much, I never in my

life wished a day to be passed so much as I do this."

"You excite my curiosity, father," said Hilda. "Why do you wish it passed?"

"Because, if a certain sum of money is not paid to me before six o'clock, I shall be the possessor of one of the finest estates in Wales," replied the miser. "It must now be five; in another hour I shall be safe—safe, Hilda!—the mortgage will be foreclosed —the estate mine! Mr. Diggs will be here at six. If I obtain this prize, Jacob, you shall drink my health in the glass of wine I put back in the bottle."

"Then it'll be the first time I ever so drunk it," replied Jacob.

"Take care it isn't the last, you thankless varlet," rejoined the miser. "Don't stand chattering there! Go and see what's o'clock." As Jacob departed to obey his injunction, Mr. Scarve paced to and fro within the room, rubbing his hands and chuckling to himself. Five minutes nearly elapsed before Jacob returned; and when he did so, it was with a countenance of very peculiar significance. "Well, is it five?" cried the miser.

"No, it's fourteen," replied Jacob.

"Fourteen!" exclaimed the miser. "What do you mean? You're drunk, sirrah—drunk on the promise of a glass of wine."

"No, I'm not," replied Jacob. "I mean that there is a troop of fourteen horsemen at the door. There! —don't you hear 'em? They make noise enough, I should think."

And as he spoke, a loud knocking, mixed with

[illegible]

"Hold your peace," cried the miser furiously, "or I'll strangle you! I'll not be insulted thus by any man! Fetch me my sword!"

"Father!" exclaimed Hilda, "why do you excite yourself thus? Sir Bulkeley Price has but done what was right; he has brought you back your money."

"What is it o'clock, Jacob?—did you ascertain that?" cried the miser.

"Not five, sir—not five," replied Jacob.

"Oh! perdition seize him! he is in time," cried the miser. "But I'll be revenged. I'll have his blood if I can't have the estate. My sword, Jacob! What! you won't move? Nay, then, I'll fetch it myself." And, opening a side door, he rushed up a small flight of steps leading to his bedroom.

"Some mischief will happen, Jacob," cried Hilda, with a terrified look. "I never saw my father so agitated before. I'll go forth myself, and entreat Sir Bulkeley to depart."

"Don't expose yourself to the insults of his servants, miss," rejoined Jacob. "I did not tell master a quarter what they said of him." But despite his entreaties, and those of her aunt, who also endeavoured to detain her, she rushed forth, followed by Jacob.

On gaining the street, Hilda found Jacob's statement perfectly correct. A troop of fourteen horsemen, with Sir Bulkeley Price at their head, were drawn up in front of the house. Most of them were well mounted, though a few of the number rode stout Welsh ponies. All had swords at their sides,

and pistols in their holsters, as was needful from the amount of money they carried; every man having been provided with two bags, each containing five hundred pounds in gold, slung over his saddle-bow. A pile of these precious sacks lay at the door, and some of the men were now adding to the heap, while others were unslinging bags from their comrades' saddles. The whole company were in high glee, and laughing loudly. The leader of the troop, Sir Bulkeley Price, was a stout portly gentleman, whose swollen, inflamed cheeks and mulberry nose showed he was by no means indifferent to the pleasures of the table. A claret-coloured velvet riding-coat, buttoned to the throat, displayed his full chest and rather commanding figure to advantage; while a well-powdered, full-bottomed periwig contrasted strongly with his rubicund and fiery visage. Hilda's appearance created a great sensation among the lookers-on, and especially attracted the attention of the barber, who was chattering with Mr. Deacle about the occurrence, and of the fair Thomasine, who was leaning out of an upper window, just above her father's sign of the Three Pigeons.

"There's Miss Scarve!" cried Peter, calling to Thomasine.

"I see her," replied the mercer's daughter. "Poor thing, how I pity her—to be exposed to such insults! I long to fly to her assistance."

"Do, do!" cried Peter. "I'll fly with you."

"No, don't," said Mr. Deacle; "you had better not interfere. Lord bless me! I wonder what it all means."

Heedless of what was passing around her, for she heard her father's furious voice in the passage, Hilda rushed toward Sir Bulkeley Price, and, in a tone of the most earnest entreaty, cried, "O sir, I implore you to go away! My father is fearfully incensed—some mischief will happen!"

"You are Mr. Scarve's daughter, I presume?" returned Sir Bulkeley, politely taking off his hat. "I should never have suspected him of owning aught so beautiful. But why should I go away, Miss Scarve? I am merely come to pay your father a sum of money which I borrowed from him."

"But it is the manner of paying it, sir—the public manner—the exposure—that incenses him," cried Hilda. "I would not for twice the amount, that this had happened."

"I dare say not," replied Sir Bulkeley; "but your father has forced me into the measure. My estate would have been forfeited if I had not repaid the money by six o'clock. It is as unpleasant to me as it can be to him; but I had no alternative."

At this moment a loud angry cry was heard at the door, and the miser appeared, brandishing his drawn sword at it. His mad career was opposed by Jacob, whose wig was knocked off in his endeavours to push him backwards.

"Villain!" cried the miser, shaking his hand at Sir Bulkeley, "villain, you shall repent your insolence! Release me, Jacob! Let me get at him!"

"No, you shan't!" replied Jacob, who had to exert all his strength, such was the miser's fury, to keep him back.

Mr. Scarve's vociferations of rage were now drowned by the hootings and jeers of the Welsh baronet's attendants, who did all in their power to incense him further. Terrified by the cries, Hilda clasped her hands in agony, and again addressed herself to Sir Bulkeley.

"As you are a gentleman, sir, I beseech you to withdraw," she said.

"Such an appeal, and from such lips, is irresistible," replied Sir Bulkeley, again raising his hat.

"He is no gentleman, Hilda!" shrieked her father, who overheard what was said. "Come away, girl, I command you—leave him to me?"

"Well crowed, old cock!" cried one of the attendants, in mockery. And all laughed jeeringly, as before.

"Hold your tongues, you saucy knaves!" cried Jacob, fiercely regarding them; "or, as soon as I'm at liberty, I'll break some of your addle pates."

"For pity's sake—go, go!" cried Hilda to the baronet, "and take the money with you. Another time will do for payment."

"Pardon me, Miss Scarve," replied Sir Bulkeley; "another time will *not* do. I mustn't jeopardise my estate. Mr. Scarve," he shouted to the miser, "here is your money—fourteen thousand pounds, in gold. Friends," he added, looking round at the crowd of spectators in the street, and at the windows, "I call you all to witness, that this money is paid before six o'clock. I will take your word, Miss Scarve, for a receipt, and for the delivering up of the mortgage deeds."

"Take hence your money, villain!" vociferated the miser. "I want none of it."

This exclamation was followed by a roar of derisive laughter from the baronet's attendants.

"Silence them—oh! silence them, sir!" cried Hilda imploringly.

Sir Bulkeley looked majestically round, and his attendants became instantly mute. At the same time, Jacob forced Mr. Scarve into the house; and Hilda, hastily expressing her thanks to the baronet, withdrew. In a few seconds, the whole of the bags of money were collected, and placed on the threshold. Sir Bulkeley would not, however, depart till Jacob returned, when he committed the heap to his custody.

"What have you done with your master?" he asked.

"He has fainted, and his daughter is tending him," replied Jacob.

"Well, take him that restorative," rejoined Sir Bulkeley, pointing to the money-bags; "it will speedily revive him."

So saying, he rode off with his followers, amid the acclamation of the spectators. The same persons next began to hoot Jacob, and even seemed disposed to assail him; but, being now provided with his crab-stick, he presented such a menacing and formidable appearance that those nearest him slunk off.

In the hurry of the moment, it has been omitted to mention that when Hilda retired, the fair Thomasine uttered a scream and fainted. Made aware of the circumstance, both by the cry and the disappearance

of the mercer and his wife from the windows, Peter Pokerich quitted his own dwelling, and flew to render aid. With some little difficulty, the sensitive damsel was brought to herself; but when restored to consciousness, she was very palpitating and hysterical, and leaned against the wall, with her head upon her hand, in the attitude of a tragic heroine.

"Oh, the indignities that that sweet creature has endured!" she gasped. "She is a model of filial piety, and more to be admired than the Grecian Daughter."

"Much more," said Peter, "though I don't recollect the particular attractions of the lady you mention."

"Would I were her friend!" cried the fair Thomasine. "Would I might pour my sorrows into her sympathetic bosom!"

"What hinders you from doing so?" asked the barber.

An hysterical sob was all the fair Thomasine's answer.

"Fourteen thousand pounds!" exclaimed Peter, almost unconsciously. "What a fortune Hilda Scarve will be!"

"She would be a fortune without a farthing," cried the fair Thomasine.

Meantime the crowd dispersed; but not before Jacob had noticed some suspicious-looking personages eyeing the bags of treasure lying at the door, in a very alarming manner.

"I shall have to keep strict watch to-night," he thought. "Such a public delivery of money as this

is almost an inducement to robbery. We ought to have a couple of watchmen."

Thus ruminating, he removed the whole of the bags, twenty-eight in number, and each containing five hundred pounds, into the passage. He then locked, bolted, and barred the door, and afterwards conveyed the treasure into the room generally used by Mr. Scarve. The miser, as he had stated to Sir Bulkeley, had fainted. The unhappy man recovered just as Jacob brought in the last two bags, and seeing the treasure before him, uttered a wild shriek, broke from his daughter and sister-in-law, who were tending him, and, throwing himself upon the heap, relapsed into insensibility.

VIII

The Mysterious Letter—The Landlord of the Rose and Crown—Cordwell Firebras.

It will now be necessary, for a short space, to retrace the current of our story. Peter Pokerich, as related in a previous chapter, crossed over to his own house with the letter he had abstracted from Randulph's saddle-bags, and immediately proceeding to examine it, found it was addressed to Mr. Cordwell Firebras, at the Rose and Crown, Gardiner's Street, Petty France. This not tending greatly to enlighten him, he tried to obtain a peep at its contents by pressing down the sides between his finger and thumb; but not being able to make out any-

thing in this way, his curiosity got the master of him, and he broke the seal; but so dexterously and carefully, that he felt confident he could restore the letter to its original appearance if needful. He then read as follows:—

"FRIEND CORDWELL,—The bearer of this letter is just the man you want. He's a bold rider; always in at the death; and as rash and daring as our young squire himself. The game I sent you was seized by the keepers, as perhaps you may have heard; but I'll forward another basket shortly by a safer conveyance. Don't be in a hurry about coming over to us; and tell the young squire we can't promise him much sport this season. The game is plenty, but our kennel is but thinly stocked. The old pack is nearly broken up; Talbot and Ringwood have been 'ticed away by old George's keeper; and we shall do no good unless the great squire on t'other side of the river will send us a strong pack of harriers, of the best French breed. We want some Scotch terriers sadly, for the rats are greatly on the increase. If the young squire can manage this, the sooner he comes the better, but not otherwise. Meanwhile, I again advise you to engage the bearer of this letter.—Your assured friend, NED POYNTON."

This letter was a complete enigma to the barber. He read it over and over again, but could make neither head nor tail of it. He could not help thinking that more was meant than met the eye, but still he could not penetrate the mystery. He

determined, however, to call the next morning at the Rose and Crown to make some inquiries after Mr. Cordwell Firebras, whose name had something mysterious and extraordinary about it that piqued his curiosity. And with this intention he retired to rest.

"After all," said Peter, and he laid his head on his pillow, "I shouldn't wonder if that young man turned out a poacher. Now I think of it, he certainly looks like one. Nobody but a poacher would prefer his own hair to a wig." Sallying forth betimes the next day, he repaired to the Rose and Crown, which was but a short distance from his own dwelling, and inquired of the potboy at the door whether a gentleman of the name of Cordwell Firebras lodged there. The potboy could give him no answer; but, applying to the chamberlain, he was told that Mr. Firebras frequented the house, but did not lodge there.

"He generally comes in the evening," said the man; "and, if you have any message to leave for him, I will deliver it."

"What sort of a man is he?" inquired the barber.

Before the chamberlain could reply, the landlord made his appearance, and on being informed of the barber's inquiry, asked him what he wanted with Mr. Cordwell Firebras.

"A gentleman who has a letter for him called at my shop last night," said Peter, "and wished me to inquire whether he was still here—that's all."

"Pray step this way, sir," rejoined the landlord, ushering Peter into an inner room. Here the landlord took up a chair, and, knocking it three times

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About four o'clock, as he was sitting in his shop, combing out a flaxen periwig, Mr. Crackenthorpe Cripps came in, and, flinging himself into a seat, said—

"Scatter some pulvilio over me, Pokerich! for the tar and paint of the wherry I have just quitted have quite overcome me."

Having recovered breath, the valet then proceeded to explain the business with which he had been charged by his uncle, and he found a ready agent in the barber, who, however, explained to him the difficulty of obtaining any precise information of what passed in the miser's dwelling. While discussing this matter, it occurred to Peter that Mr. Cripps was a proper person to consult about the mysterious letter. He knew that the valet was a person of no particular scruples, and might be safely confided in. He therefore showed him the letter. Mr. Cripps read it over twice or thrice, and at last said—

"Egad, I cannot tell what to make of it, but I'll soon find out the meaning of the riddle. Make it up again, and I'll deliver it myself to Mr. Cordwell Firebras."

"When will you take it?" asked the barber, after he had carefully fastened up the seal.

"At once," replied Mr. Cripps. "I'm in the humour for an adventure. I'll return directly, and report my success."

He accordingly set forth, and encountering an empty chair as he entered the area in front of the Abbey, got into it, and told the bearers to proceed

to the Rose and Crown. Arrived there, with all the assurance he could muster, he strutted into the bar, and flourishing his cane, inquired for Mr. Cordwell Firebras. The landlord stared at him somewhat suspiciously, but returned no answer; and Mr. Cripps, calling to mind the barber's account of his interview, took up a chair, as if accidentally, and struck it thrice on the floor. This operation acted like magic on the landlord. He made a peculiar sign in return, and said—

"He is not here now, sir; indeed, he seldom visits us, except in an evening. But you'll find him at his lodgings, in Ship Yard, not a stone's throw from this." And he added in a lower tone, as Mr. Cripps bowed in acknowledgment, "The club meets here, sir."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Cripps. "What! every night?"

"Every Friday night, at eleven," replied the landlord. "But may I ask you, sir, where the king is?"

"Over the water," rejoined Cripps; and he thought to himself, "a nice Jacobite's nest I've stumbled upon now, i'faith."

"I see it's all right," said the landlord, smiling. And he accompanied the valet to the door, ushered him to his chair, and told the bearers where to take him. Mr. Cripps speedily arrived at his destination, and was deposited at the door of a small and unpretending-looking house. A middle-aged woman of respectable appearance answered his knock, and informed him that Mr. Cordwell Firebras lodged there, but she was not certain whether he was

within. Judging from her manner that she only wished to ascertain whether her lodger would receive him, Mr. Cripps thought it better to secure the interview by delivering his credentials. He did so accordingly, and the result was such as he anticipated. She returned in a few minutes, saying that Mr. Firebras *was* at home, and would be happy to see him.

Mustering all his resolution, Mr. Cripps strutted after her, and was ushered into a small room, in which was a middle-aged gentleman, who immediately advanced towards him. Mr. Cripps had sufficient knowledge of the world to see at once that he had a very dangerous person to deal with, and that it behoved him to be careful how he proceeded. Never had he seen such broad shoulders, such muscular legs, and such a burly frame, as were possessed by the individual before him. Mr. Cordwell Firebras was a little below the middle height, and his squareness of figure, aided by a loose coat of dark-brown cloth, edged with silver, which reached half-way down his legs, made him look almost as broad as long. His features were somewhat coarse, his cheek bones high, his complexion light, and his beard, brows, and eyelashes of a sandy hue. Altogether he had the look of a Scotsman. His chin was large and broad, evincing the utmost determination, mixed with considerable craftiness; his mouth wide, his nose broad and flat, and his eyes of a light grey. He wore a flaxen bob wig, which harmonised well with his light complexion, and carried a broad-bladed sword, evidently intended more for use than orna-

ment. To this not very prepossessing exterior, Mr. Cordwell Firebras added easy, affable, and almost graceful manners. It was quite clear to Mr. Cripps that he was acting upon the instructions of his correspondent, for he received him with the greatest cordiality, shook him by the hand and motioned him to be seated. It did not escape Mr. Cripps, in the hasty survey he took of the room, that there was a basket-hilted sword in the corner, together with a brace of long-barrelled silver-mounted pistols, and a Highland dirk. Nor did he fail to notice that the window opened upon a small garden, skirting Saint James's Park, thus offering a ready means of escape if required. These things considered, Mr. Cripps did not feel entirely at his ease, and it required all his effrontery to enable him to go through with his part. Whether it was that Cordwell Firebras perceived his uneasiness, or that his quick perception of character detected the imposition attempted to be practised upon him, is immaterial, but his countenance suddenly changed, and the affable, almost courtier-like manner with which he had commenced, gave way to a stern, scrutinising glance and freezing demeanour that made the valet tremble. They were alone, for having ushered Mr. Cripps into the room, the elderly female retired, closing the door after her.

"You are lately from the country, sir, I believe?" asked Firebras.

"Just arrived, sir," replied Mr. Cripps, taking out his snuff-box to hide his confusion; "allow me to offer you a pinch."

Firebras bowed and accepted the offer. A peculiar smile, which the valet did not like, crossed his features.

"I must compliment you upon your air and manner, sir," said Firebras, in a tone of slight irony; "they are anything but rustic. But may I now ask whom I have the honour of addressing?"

"Mr. Randulph Crew," replied the valet confidently.

"Randulph Crew!" exclaimed Firebras, almost starting. "What! the son of my old friend, Randulph Crew? Impossible!"

"I am not aware that my father enjoyed the honour of your friendship, sir," replied the valet, who began to fear he had got on ticklish ground; "but my name is Randulph Crew, and so was my father's before me."

Though the day was by no means chilly, there was a small fire burning in the grate. Mr. Cordwell Firebras placed the letter which he held in his hand before it, and certain lines of writing, traced in invisible ink, instantly appeared. These he eagerly scanned.

"It is useless to trifle longer, sir," he cried, turning suddenly upon the valet. "You are an impostor. For what purpose are you come hither? Answer me, or your life shall pay the forfeit of your rashness." As he spoke he drew his sword. Mr. Cripps, though greatly alarmed, drew likewise, but his blade was instantly beaten from his grasp by Firebras.

"Raise a cry, and you are a dead man!" pursued

the latter, locking the door and putting the key in his pocket. "Who are you, sirrah?"

"My name is Crackenthorpe Cripps, and I am chief valet to Beau Villiers," returned the other, bowing.

"You are a spy, rascal!" cried Firebras. "You have come on an errand of the danger of which you were ignorant. But you will get nothing for your pains."

"Pardon me, Mr. Firebras," said the valet, who was by no means destitute of courage, or at all events of the quality next in value to it, self-possession—"I *have* gained my object. I have discovered the existence of a Jacobite club, of which you are a member. I have discovered that there is a plot hatching in Cheshire, and can easily find out who is implicated in it; and I have only to give information to a magistrate, and your arrest must follow."

"Well, sir," replied Firebras calmly—"well, sir?"

"But I have no such intention," continued Mr. Cripps; "your secret is safe with me, provided——"

"You are paid for your silence—ha?"

"Precisely, Mr. Firebras. I am not a Jacobite, neither am I a Hanoverian; and I care as little for the Elector as I do for young Perkin. The fact is, you are in my power, sir, and I shall make the most of my position. Buy me, and I will deal with you fairly."

"Hum!" said Firebras, looking fixedly at him; "well, I *will* employ you, and will also make it worth your while to be true to me. Randulph

Crew has of course lost this letter. I will not inquire how it came into your hands; but he cannot be aware that it has reached me. My correspondent says he is about to visit his uncle, Mr. Abel Beechcroft, and cautions me against that gentleman."

"And with reason, sir," remarked Mr. Cripps. "I, also, advise you to beware of him. My uncle is Mr. Beechcroft's butler."

"Then, from your connection, you may materially aid me in my designs upon this young man," said Firebras. "You must take a letter from me to him."

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Cripps; "and it fortunately happens that he is to breakfast with my master to-morrow morning, when I can easily deliver it."

"Good," replied Firebras; "I will prepare it at once."

With this, he sat down to a side-table on which writing materials were placed, and with much deliberation penned a despatch, and sealed it. He then opened a secret drawer, and took out five guineas, which he gave to the valet.

"It is perhaps a needless piece of trouble to seal the letter," he observed significantly; "but you will learn nothing by opening it beyond the fact that I desire an interview with Mr. Crew. I know I can trust you."

"Oh, you may trust to my honour, Mr. Firebras, 'pon rep!" said the valet, placing his hand upon his breast.

"I trust to the value you place on your own safety, Mr. Cripps," replied Firebras significantly. "Attempt to play me false, and nothing shall save you from my vengeance! I have secret agents, who will find sure means of reaching you."

These words were pronounced in a tone and with a look that impressed Mr. Cripps with a full sense of the speaker's power of executing his threat.

"You need be under no apprehension about me, Mr. Firebras," he said.

"I am under none, fellow!" rejoined the other, laughing scornfully; "or you should never quit this room alive. Come to me to-morrow night, at ten. I may have more work for you."

"Willingly," replied Mr. Cripps.

Firebras then unlocked the door, and let out the valet, who was ushered to his chair by the elderly female. As he took his place within it, having first ordered the bearers to convey him to the spot where they took him up, he muttered to himself, "So the adventure has terminated very satisfactorily. This Randulph Crew seems destined to make my fortune. Everybody pays me to play the spy upon him. That Cordwell Firebras is an awkward customer. He has an eye that looks through one, and seems to penetrate one's very soul. It won't do to play cross with him. But I must trump up some story to delude the little barber. I'll tell him that nothing is to be made of it—put him off in some way."

Thus musing, he was conveyed to the entrance of

the Little Sanctuary, where he alighted, discharged the chair, and bent his steps towards Peter Pokerich's shop, with the full determination of putting his design into execution.

IX

The Stranger at the Barber's

NOTWITHSTANDING his engagement to Beau Villiers, Randulph, accustomed to early hours, and blessed, moreover, with a very healthy appetite, needed no urging on the part of Mr. Jukes to sit down at eight o'clock, on the second morning after his arrival in town, to a sort of preliminary breakfast with uncle Abel. Glad of the excuse for a little extra indulgence in repose, Trussell did not rise till late, and Randulph was therefore left to a *tête-à-tête* with his elder uncle. Whether it was that Abel was in a better humour than before, or that he was not fretted by Trussell, whose remarks, however well meant, generally tended to excite his cynical propensities, Randulph could not tell, but he certainly found him more agreeable than he had previously thought him. Abel questioned his nephew narrowly as to his tastes and pursuits, and seemed pleased with the answers he received. In fact, things went on so prosperously, that Mr. Jukes, who was carving a fine Westphalia ham at the well-spread sideboard, suspended his operations to rub his hands with delight.

Abel noticed his exhilaration, and guessing the cause, could not refrain from smiling, and Randulph thought he had never seen so pleasant a smile before. Abel's heart, indeed, it was evident, was warming towards his nephew; and he made no attempt to check the kindly feeling. He descanted with much force and truth on the dangers to which a young man must be exposed on his first entrance into the world, but exhibited far less strait-lacedness than might have been expected. He advised his nephew to mix with society, but not to become a part of it; to use, but not abuse, the advantages nature had given him; and to push his fortune to the utmost; displaying throughout the whole discourse a shrewdness of observation, a nice perception of character, and a knowledge of the world, for which Randulph had not given him credit, and which raised him materially in his opinion. On one point only the young man thought him guilty of injustice—namely, in the bitter and disparaging view he took of women. On this head, therefore, he ventured to differ with him, and his zeal and earnestness appeared to interest Abel. When he had done, the old man shrugged his shoulders, and contented himself with saying, "You'll think differently one day."

Randulph would have replied, but a plate of ham, accompanied by a significant look from the discreet butler, warned him not to pursue the subject further. Accordingly he was silent, and Abel returned to his exposition and dissection of society with the same earnestness as before.

About half-past ten Trussell made his appearance. He was dressed with unusual care; had a world of the finest lace at his wrists and on his breast; and wore a green velvet coat, richly embroidered, a satin waistcoat of the same colour, woven with gold, and diamond buckles at his knees, as well as on his shoes. The only part of his attire which appeared to be neglected was his peruke, and this did not escape Abel's attention, as he scanned him contemptuously from head to foot.

"It's all very well," he said drily; "you are sufficiently be-laced and be-scented to fit you for the beau's society; but your wig is out of order."

"Why, you don't surely think I am going in this old peruke, sir?" rejoined Trussell, smiling. "No, no! I'm not quite so careless. I've sent my best periwig to be dressed by Peter Pokerich, the barber in the Little Sanctuary, and mean to put it on as we pass on our way to Spring Gardens, where, as you know, Mr. Villiers resides."

"A barber in the Little Sanctuary!" cried Randulph; "why, he must be the very person I met when——" Here a stern look from uncle Abel stopped him, and called the colour to his cheeks.

"Why did you send it there?" remarked Abel angrily to his brother. "Was there no other barber near at hand?"

"Oh yes, sir, plenty," replied Trussell; "but Pokerich understands the mode, and I desired to appear to advantage on this occasion. I wish I could induce you to adopt the present fashion,

Randulph. Your own hair is certainly very fine, but a periwig would be far more becoming."

"Be natural as long as you can, and keep your own hair, Randulph," said Abel.

"I intend to do so, sir," replied the young man.

"But, at all events, your dress must be improved," pursued Trussell. "I will introduce you to M. Desmartins, the French tailor, in Piccadilly. He will make you quite another thing."

"And empty your purse at the same time," sneered Abel. "Wear out the dress you have on. It's almost new."

"It is *quite* new," said Randulph, a little abashed. "It was made expressly for my visit to town, by Stracey, of Chester, who works for all the best people in the county."

"Stracey, of Chester—ha! ha!" exclaimed uncle Trussell jeeringly. "You had better put by Mr. Stracey for your return. But it is time we started. I must stop a few minutes at Pokerich's." They then set forth, and it was with a throbbing heart that the young man again found himself beside the dwelling of the miser's daughter. He gazed eagerly at it, in the hope of catching a glimpse of Hilda, but could discern nothing through the barred and dust-begrimed windows.

"May I ask what is the cause of uncle Abel's aversion to Mr. Scarve?" he inquired of Trussell.

"I would rather not be questioned on that subject," replied the other, "because I am quite sure, if I told you, Abel would discover from your manner

that I had disclosed his secret. By-the-bye," added, "is Hilda Scarve really a fine girl?"

Randulph returned a rapturous affirmative.

"Egad, then," pursued Trussell, as if debati some matter with himself, "I don't know whet one speculation would not be as good as t'other!

"What do you mean, uncle?" inquired Randul

"Why, that a marriage with Hilda Scarve mi answer as well as waiting for Abel's money," repl Trussell; "the miser must be immensely rich immensely! I'll call on him one of these days, a sound him on the subject of the union."

"Recollect your brother's injunctions, sir!" joined Randulph, who was, however, so enchant by the proposition, that he could have flung arms round his uncle's neck, and hugged him— may be hazardous."

"Tut—tut!" exclaimed Trussell, "he'll ne hear of it. They have no sort of communicati Abel hates him like the devil—as well he m But I must not say more. And here we are Pokerich's." With this he entered Peter's sh The little barber was engaged at the moment shaving a customer, and called to his apprentice set chairs for the new-comers. He did not at f notice Randulph, who was behind his uncle; when the young man came into full view, his h trembled so much that the razor slipped, inflict a slight wound on the chin of the gentleman he shaving.

"Have a care, fellow!" cried this person angri "you have cut me."

"Ten thousand pardons, sir," apologised Peter; "it is not much, sir—a mere trifle—a little sticking-plaster will set all to rights." So saying, he very dexterously wiped off the lather, and bathing the gentleman's cheek with warm water, speedily succeeded in stanching the blood. He then finished shaving him, and taking a light flaxen wig from a block hard by, fitted it on his head. This done, the gentleman arose, walked towards a glass to ascertain the extent of the injury he had received, and finding it very trifling, laughed good humouredly. He was a middle-sized man, remarkably squarely and powerfully built; and as the barber assisted him to put on his coat, and fasten on his sword, Randulph could not help noticing his great apparent strength of frame.

"You have not a very steady hand, friend," remarked the stranger, as he took out his purse to pay the barber.

"I never made such a mistake before, sir," replied Peter, "never, on my honour."

"Then I suppose it was this young gentleman who startled you," replied the other, laughing, "for the accident occurred just as he entered your shop."

"Why, really, I was rather surprised to see him, I must own," returned Peter. "Mr. Randulph Crew, your most obedient."

"What!" cried the stranger, with a look of astonishment. "Is that Mr. Randulph Crew?"

It was now Randulph's turn to appear surprised.

"You will wonder at my exclamation, sir," pursued the stranger, advancing towards him; "but I

knew a gentleman of your name, which is not a very common one, in Cheshire, years ago—knew him intimately."

"Probably my father," said Randulph.

"He is well, I hope?" asked the other.

"Alas, sir, I lost him a year ago," replied Randulph.

Here the conversation dropped, for the stranger seemed a little embarrassed, as if he had something to say, and yet did not know how to set about it. He glanced at Trussell, who had taken his seat, and was submitting his bald pate to Peter, while the latter was adjusting upon it, with the utmost care, a very well-powdered peruke.

"Is that a relative of yours?" asked the stranger of Randulph.

"My uncle, sir," replied the young man.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the stranger. And he again hesitated.

"A very singular person," thought Randulph.

"There," cried Trussell, rising, and looking at himself in the glass; "that'll do—capital—capital!"

"Mr. Scarve lives over the way, barber, I believe?" said the stranger to Peter.

"He does, sir," replied the latter. "That's the house. A very strange affair occurred there yester-evening."

"What might that be?" inquired the stranger.

"Why," replied the barber, "about five o'clock the whole street was alarmed by the arrival of a troop of fourteen horsemen, each with a thousand pounds in a couple of bags at his saddle-bow. Well,

sir, these horsemen stopped at the miser's door, and threw down their bags before it; and it turned out to be the payment of the sum of fourteen thousand pounds borrowed from old Starve — beg pardon, Scarve—on mortgage by Sir Bulkeley Price, and which the latter was obliged to pay at a certain time, or his estate would have been foreclosed. It was a near run for Sir Bulkeley—he only just saved his distance. Ah! you should have seen how the old miser raved and swore when he found himself robbed of his prey. But for his daughter's interference, he would certainly have laid violent hands on the knight. Ha! ha!"

Randulph, whose breast was agitated with conflicting feelings, was about to question the barber further as to Hilda's conduct on the occasion, when he was checked by the stranger, who, turning hastily to Peter, said, "This is an unheard-of mode of paying mortgage money, and so large a sum, too. Are you sure it was as much as fourteen thousand pounds?"

"As that I have a comb in my hand," replied the barber. "And it was paid in gold, too; I heard the chink of the metal myself. Besides, Sir Bulkeley called upon me, together with the other spectators, to witness the payment."

"You surprise me," exclaimed the stranger; "I must have a word with Mr. Scarve on the subject. Good-morning, gentlemen. Mr. Randulph Crew, we may possibly meet again." And raising his hat, he walked across the street, and knocked at the miser's door.

"Who is that strange person?" asked Trussell of Peter.

"Haven't the least idea, sir," replied the barber. "He came in here to be shaved; that's all I know of him. Never ask customers' names."

Randulph, meanwhile, ran to the door to see how the stranger would be received, and was somewhat chagrined to find that Jacob, after reconnoitring him according to custom, and detaining him while he consulted his master, admitted him.

"He will see Hilda," sighed the young man.

"Come, nephew, come!" cried Trussell impatiently. "We shall be late."

Sorely against his will, Randulph suffered himself to be dragged away, and they proceeded along King Street, in the direction of Spring Gardens.

X

The Beau's Levée—The Breakfast—the Embarkation for the Folly.

Beau Villiers' residence looked upon Saint James's Park, and had a small garden attached to it. It was by no means a large house, but exquisitely furnished; the whole of the internal decorations being French, and in the gorgeous taste of Louis the Fourteenth. The visitors were admitted by a couple of powdered lacqueys in rich liveries of scarlet faced with white, and passing a large, snow-white French poodle of a peculiar breed, lying on

a rug near the door, traversed a hall crowded with busts, statues, bronzes, and large porcelain jars. A page, in a fanciful costume, who might have played a part in one of Watteau's pictures, met them at the foot of the stairs, and, mounting before them, ushered them along a corridor to the entrance of a chamber before which stood two grinning Africans, arrayed in Oriental habiliments, and wearing great brass earrings, and large muslin turbans adorned with brazen crescents. One of them threw open the door, and the two visitors entered a waiting-room, in which a number of persons were assembled, most of whom being known to Trussell, he very courteously returned their salutations.

"Ah, *mon ami* Desmartins," he said to a little bowing and cringing personage, very ill-dressed (as tailors are apt to be), from whose pocket depended a measuring tape, while he carried a pattern-book under his arm, "how are you? This is my nephew, Desmartins. I have told him he must put himself under your skilful hands."

"Proud to undertake him, Mr. Trussell—*enchante!*" replied the Frenchman. "Your nephew has a very fine figure, *ma foi!* But his dress is not at all à-la-mode. Very clownish—what you call it?—countrified—ha! ha!"

"So I told him, Desmartins," replied Trussell. "We shall look in upon you to-day or to-morrow, and put that to rights."

"Enchanted to see you, Mr. Trussell, and you, sare," replied the tailor, bowing to Randulph.

"Ah, Mr. Penrose, is that you?" pursued Trussell, turning to a slight, effeminate-looking young man, with a paper box and a casket under his arm. "I suppose you have got a new importation of gloves and perfumes—tuberose, orange, jasmine, essence d'Espagne—eh?"

"I have just invented a new scent, sir," replied the perfumer, "and am come to solicit Mr. Villiers' permission to give it his name."

"And if he grants it, your fortune is made," replied Trussell; "the bouquet à-la-Villiers will carry all before it. Ah, Chipchase," turning to a little fellow, whose stunted figure, velvet cap, boots and other equipments, left no doubt as to his being a jockey, "what news from Newmarket? Has Lord Haversham won the cup, or Sir John Fagg?"

"Neither, sir," replied the jockey. "Mr. Villiers is the winner."

"Bravo! bravissimo!" cried Trussell, clapping his hands; "that's famous! Why, your news is worth twenty pounds to me, Chipchase. I backed Mr. Villiers against the field, though—I may now say it—without a notion he would win, but merely out of compliment."

"The knowin' 'uns has been taken in this time, that's certain, Mr. Trussell," replied the jockey, with a sly wink. "Sir John thought himself safe, but he now finds he's on the wrong side of the hedge. I hope your honour will allow me the pleasure of drinking your health."

"That I will," returned Trussell, taking out his

purse, and giving him a piece of money; "and in a crown bowl of punch, too. Ah, Ned Oglethorpe," he added, passing on to another person in a white flannel jacket, and with an open collar; "how are the rackets? My nephew Randulph, Ned. We will come and play a match at tennis with you one of these days. Let me know when the next main is fought at the cockpit. Captain Culpepper, your most obedient. Nay, don't walk away, captain; I'm not going to dun you for the few crowns you lost to me at trick-track, at the British. Randulph, this is Captain Culpepper, as brave a man as ever drew a sword, or brought off his friend from a street row, or," he added in a lower tone, "ever revenged a secret quarrel. Egad, at Mr. Villiers' levées one is sure to meet all one's friends. Here, nephew," he added, addressing a lithe, active-looking man, in a close-fitting linen dress, with a couple of foils under his arm, "here is the first master of fence in the world—Mr. Hewitt. You must have a few lessons in carte and tierce from him."

Whilst Randulph was returning the fencing-master's bow, the door of the inner room was opened by Mr. Cripps. On discerning Trussell and his companion, the valet immediately hastened towards them, and entreated them to step into his master, who, he affirmed, had been expecting them for some time. The apartment into which they were ushered was the beau's dressing-chamber—that part of it, however, devoted to the toilet-table and its appliances being separated from the rest by a magnificent Indian japanned screen. It was

furnished with the most refined and luxurious taste. Rose-coloured curtains drawn across the windows subdued the light, and threw a warm tint on all around, while the air was loaded with delicious perfumes. A very diminutive monkey, clothed in a scarlet coat, and wearing a bag-wig and a little sword, played its diverting tricks in one corner, while a gaudily plumaged macaw screamed in the opposite angle. Choice flowers in pots added their fragrance to the artificial odours, and a couple of exquisite little spaniels of Charles the Second's breed, with the longest and silkiest ears imaginable, and large gazelle-like eyes, occupied a cushion on the hearth. At a table covered with the whitest and finest linen, and glittering with silver of the rarest workmanship, together with a superb service of china, sat, or rather reclined, in the easiest of easy chairs, Beau Villiers. He did not rise on the appearance of his guests; but moving slightly and graciously to them, though with somewhat, Randulph fancied, of a patronising air, motioned Mr. Cripps to set them chairs. He was quite in dishabille; his graceful figure being enveloped in a loose dressing-robe of the richest brocade, while the place of a peruke was supplied by a green silk cap, very becomingly put on. His shirt was open at the throat, and decorated with a profusion of lace at the bosom and wrists. Pink silk hose and velvet slippers completed his costume. There were two other persons present; Sir Singleton Spinke, and a very portly gentleman with puffed-out inflamed cheeks, who was introduced as Sir

Bulkeley Price, and whom Randulph concluded must be the hero of the story he had just heard related by the barber—a circumstance which gave him a peculiar interest in his eyes. Meanwhile, Mr. Cripps, who, together with the page, officiated at breakfast, proceeded to do the honours, and twirling the mill of a richly chased silver chocolate pot, poured out two well-frothed cups of the unctuous beverage, and handed them to the new-comers.

A small modicum of a Strasbourg pâté, washed down by a cup of green tea and a glass of claret, constituted the beau's breakfast. Sir Singleton Spinke took chocolate, picked the wing of a chicken, and wound himself up with a glass of usquebaugh. Ample justice was done to the cutlets, the broils, and various other dishes with which the covers were filled, by Sir Bulkeley Price; nor did Trussell or Randulph come far behind him, notwithstanding the preliminary breakfast of the latter. Just before the introduction of the usquebaugh, Sir Bulkeley, after looking round and coughing significantly, said in a low tone, to the chief valet, "I suppose, Mr. Cripps, there is no ale in the house?"

"No what! Sir Bulkeley?" rejoined Mr. Cripps, staring as if he could not possibly imagine he had heard aright.

"Ale, rascal—ale!" replied the knight emphatically, and rather angrily.

"No, Sir Bulkeley," replied Mr. Cripps, bowing; "there is no ale, but there is toasted cheese, if that will serve your turn."

Angry as he was, the knight could not help

laughing at the valet's impertinence; and a glass of usquebaugh, in which he pledged the old beau, entirely appeased him. The conversation during the meal was lively enough, and was chiefly maintained by the beau and Trussell, their discourse running upon all sorts of fashionable topics, scandal, women, play, and public amusements, in which, as he knew so little about the matters discussed, Randulph took no great interest. His attention, however, was instantly aroused, when Trussell, turning laughingly to Sir Bulkeley, told him he had heard of his "new way of paying old debts."

"I mentioned the matter to Villiers before your arrival," returned Sir Bulkeley; "and it diverted him as much as it appears to divert you. Egad! we had to ride hard, though. Several of my tradesmen met me at Highgate, and offered to escort me through the town, but I declined the attention, being of opinion that we were a sufficiently large party without them. You should have seen how the folks stared as we rode along the streets."

"I don't wonder at it," replied Trussell, laughing; "I am almost surprised the trained-bands were not sent after you."

"The cream of the adventure was, as usual, the close," pursued the knight. "Never was fury equal to that displayed by the miser at his disappointment. I declare I almost pitied him. His daughter is a charming girl—beautiful as an angel, and rich —nay, i'faith, it is impossible to say how rich she must be. Villiers, you ought to take her off her father's hands."

"I'll think of it," replied the beau carelessly; "for I am desperately in want of money. Like yourself, I have had some dealings with old Scarve, and know him to be as great an extortioner as Shylock or Sir Giles Overreach. I don t think, however, I could marry his daughter, if she had the wealth of the Indies."

"But you have never seen her, or you would alter your opinion," replied Sir Bulkeley. "She is the most beautiful creature I have beheld for this many a day."

"You pique my curiosity," rejoined the beau. "I must see this paragon of perfection. Apropos of beauty," he added to Randulph, who could scarcely hide his uneasiness; "don't you think Clementina Brabazon a fine girl, Mr. Crew?"

"Remarkably so," replied the young man distractedly.

"She is nothing to what her mother was," observed Sir Singleton. "Twenty years ago, Lady Brabazon, then Miss Norbroke, was, with one exception, the loveliest creature in existence."

"And who might be the exception?" inquired Trussell.

"I am glad you have asked me," replied Sir Singleton; "because it is a gratification to me to tell you that it was your sister Sophia—the mother of this young gentleman. Delicious creature that she was! She quite won my heart, Mr. Crew; and if she had not been insensible to my suit, I might have had the honour of being your father."

"The supposition is highly flattering," replied Randulph, smiling.

"It makes one melancholy to think of the beauties of bygone days," continued the old beau, sentimentally consoling himself at the same time with a pinch of snuff. "Not having seen the miser's daughter, I cannot speak to her attractions; but Sir Bulkeley is a good judge, and his opinion may be relied on. To my taste, the prettiest woman of her day is Kitty Conway, the actress at the little theatre in the Haymarket."

"Kitty is certainly a vastly pretty creature," rejoined Trussell; "but you need scarcely sigh in vain there, Sir Singleton."

And thus they rattled on till the beau, rising, said, "Mr. Cripps, tell Antoine I shall now make my toilette. How shall we spend the morning, gentlemen? At the Cockpit, the Groom-Porter's, the Cocoa Tree, or White's?"

"If you desire something new, sir," observed Mr. Cripps, who lingered for a moment, "there is a grand musical entertainment this morning at the Folly on the Thames. I think you would be much diverted by going thither, 'pon rep!"

"A good suggestion!" cried the beau. "I have often rowed past the Folly, but never have been inside it."

"Then don't neglect the present opportunity," said Sir Singleton. "It used to be a pleasant place, when we were young fellows, Trussell. Many a fine woman we have seen there, eh?"

"Many a one—many a one—Sir Singleton,"

replied the other; "and made love to them, too. I shall be glad to see the place again."

"The Folly be it, then!" cried the beau; "and some folks would say it was a proper place for us. Excuse me for a few moments, gentlemen. I will dress as rapidly as possible." So saying, he retired behind the screen, which was drawn still farther across the room. Not feeling much interested in the conversation which ensued after the beau's withdrawal, Randulph arose to look at some exquisite miniatures and other articles of *vertu* scattered about the room, and was engaged in examining a magnificent snuff-box, when Mr. Cripps, who had returned from attending his master, came up to him, and said in a low tone, "I am charged with a letter for you, sir. Here it is."

Randulph was prevented from making any remark by the significant looks of the valet, who, giving him to understand by sundry winks and slight gestures, that his uncle was to know nothing of the matter, glided away. Glancing at the group near the table, the young man perceived that Trussell's back was towards him, and that he was, moreover, occupied in recounting some jest to the others. He therefore moved nearer the window, broke the seal of the note, and read as follows:—

"YOUNG MAN,—The letter committed to your charge by your mother, and which was of the last importance, though you appear to have attached so little to it, has fortunately reached its destination. Otherwise, the consequences might have been serious.

It is necessary I should have an interview with you, and that without delay. I shall be in the south ambulatory of the cloisters of Westminster Abbey at six o'clock to-morrow, and shall expect you. Fail not in the appointment, as you regard your own safety and that of your mother. Not a word of this to your uncle or to any one. The slightest imprudence will place you in jeopardy.

"CORDWELL FIREBRAS."

"Cordwell Firebras!" exclaimed Randulph to himself. "Ay, now I remember, that was the name of the person to whom the missing letter was addressed. The whole affair is most mysterious; and the language of this note strange, and even alarming. I'll question Mr. Cripps about it. But hold! I am desired not to mention the matter to my uncles, or to any one. Why should I observe the caution? And yet prudence tells me I had better do so. The note is dated yesterday. A few hours, therefore, will solve the riddle. I *will* keep the appointment."

As he uttered the last words, almost unconsciously aloud, and with some emphasis, he was startled by hearing a loud laugh behind him, and, turning at the sound, perceived Trussell's round face peeping over his shoulder. He instantly crushed the letter between his fingers.

"Nay, you had better let me see it," laughed Trussell; "I overheard your exclamation. What fair dame has fallen in love with you, eh? Not the miser's daughter, surely? And yet she is almost

the only woman you can have seen. But I won't ask impertinent questions, or make impertinent remarks. I see they annoy you. You are right to keep the secret, as well as the appointment! Ha! ha!"

"You are mistaken, uncle!" cried Randulph hastily; "my appointment is with——" and checked himself.

"Poh, poh! boy, no excuses with me," interrupted Trussell. "Keep your own counsel. Fortunate dog! I was as lucky myself when I was as young. Ha! ha! But," he added, with a look of some perplexity, "what Mercury brought you the billet?"

"I did, sir," interposed Mr. Cripps, who, having observed what was going forward, flew to the rescue. "I was entrusted with it—by a lady, ahem. Your nephew makes his way rapidly, Mr. Trussell, pon rep!"

"So it appears," rejoined Trussell, laughing louder than ever. "Myself over again—ha! ha!"

Randulph was about to contradict the valet's assertion, and set his uncle right as far as he was able, but at this moment the screen was drawn aside, and discovered the beau fully dressed. He was habited in a coat of the finest scarlet cloth, richly embroidered with gold lace, a white waistcoat of the richest silk, flowered with gold in a large pattern, a point lace cravat, and a full-flowing flaxen periwig. On seeing his master, Mr. Cripps hastened to fetch his feathered hat and clouded cane, while the page brought him his gloves. Antoine, the French servant, who had assisted him to dress, then advanced with his handkerchief, which was of the

finest cambric, edged with lace, and on which he poured a perfume from a scent-bottle; while a fourth attendant handed him his snuff-box.

"And now, gentlemen, I am at your service," said the beau, carefully adjusting his hat. "Mr. Cripps, you will attend us. We may need you at the Folly."

The favourite valet bowed, and opened the door of the ante-chamber. Mr. Villiers paused for a moment to exchange a few words with the assemblage—applauding the jockey for his success—announcing to the perfumer that he had just tried his scent, and would accord him permission to put his name to it—commanding a court-suit from the tailor—and nodding to Ned Oglethorpe, Captain Culpepper, and the fencing-master. He then passed forth with his friends.

The party first took a turn on the Mall. The morning being extremely fine, the walks were filled with a gay throng as on the preceding day. Wherever they went, Beau Villiers drew all eyes upon him, and to Randulph's amusement, and Trussell's delight, they were followed by a crowd of curious gazers. Among these, Randulph noticed the stranger whom he had met at the barber's shop; but the latter did not seem to court his observation, and he soon afterwards lost sight of him.

Having sauntered as far as Buckingham House, the party retraced their steps, and quitting the park, repaired to the cockpit at Whitehall. Here Sir Bulkeley Price quitted them, having first engaged Randulph and his uncle to dine with

him at his house in Saint James's Square on the following day. A quarter of an hour was next whiled away at the cockpit, after which they proceeded to the Groom-Porter's, whose rooms closely adjoined it, where even at that hour they found high play going forward. Beau Villiers, who was a desperate gamester, and seldom liked to miss an opportunity, approached the table where they were playing hazard, and in a short space of time came off the winner of a hundred pounds. Elated with his success, and in high good humour, he left the rooms and repaired with his companions to Whitehall Stairs, where Mr. Cripps called a boat, in which they all embarked for the Folly.

Randulph had detected the stranger among the crowd of lookers-on at the Groom-Porter's, and their boat had not got many yards from shore, when he observed him descend the stairs, and get into another wherry, with the intention, as it appeared from his gestures, of following them.

XI

The Miser's Consultation with his Attorney—Jacob alarmed by his Master's Appearance at Night —The Visit of Cordwell Firebras.

By the combined attentions of his daughter and sister-in-law, the miser, after a little while, was restored to sensibility, and placed in his chair, where the glass of wine he had destined for Jacob being administered to him, mixed with hot water,

completed his recovery. Still, he was very weak; his gaze wandered from the heap of treasure on the floor to the mortgage deed on the table, and unable to bear the sight of the latter, he ordered Jacob to place the little strong-box in which he usually kept his papers on the table, and, unlocking it with a trembling hand, deposited the deed within it. This seemed to be a great relief to him, for he presently became more composed, and rising, with his daughter's assistance, stepped towards the pile of money-bags, and tried, but ineffectually, to lift one of them.

"Do not attempt it, father," said Hilda. "You had better let Jacob carry this money into your own room; and let me also recommend you to retire to rest."

"No, no," replied the miser; "I shall not sleep till I have counted the gold in each of those sacks; and if I find any deficiency, let Sir Bulkeley look to it. Take them upstairs, Jacob." The injunction was promptly obeyed, and Jacob had just completed his task, when a knock was heard at the door. "Who can it be?" cried the miser. "Ah! now I recollect; it must be my attorney, Mr. Diggs. He was to call about the foreclosure. Curses on it! instead of being present at my triumph, he will witness my mortification. Jacob, if it should be Mr. Diggs, you may admit him, but no one else. Hilda and Sister Clinton, you had better retire to your own room. I have business to transact. You may as well say good-night, for I shall go to bed as soon as Mr. Diggs leaves."

Hilda looked anxiously at her father, and kissed his brow.

"Have you anything to say, child?" he asked, touched by her affection.

"Only that I wish you would not count the money to-night," she replied. "You need rest."

"I shall sleep all the sounder for having counted it," he replied; "especially," he added, with great asperity, "if I find there is any mistake."

"Well, I hope you will be better to-morrow," sighed Hilda, and she withdrew with her aunt.

The next moment Jacob ushered into the room a respectable-looking middle-aged man, with smooth rosy features, somewhat disfigured in their expression by what is termed a cocked eye. Indeed, no power of vision seemed to reside in the orb thus unnaturally fixed. This blemish excepted, Mr. Diggs—for he it was—might be said to have a prepossessing countenance, except that there were some lines of treachery about the mouth, and that the chin was very cunningly formed. He was plainly but handsomely attired in a dark suit, and had neither the air nor the manner of a pettifogging attorney, which, indeed, he was not. His voice was so agreeably modulated, that it fell almost like notes of music on the ear; and he had a very pleasing and very plausible address.

"Well, sir, am I to congratulate you?" he said, as he took the chair offered him by Jacob. "Do I pay my respects to a Welsh squire? Ha! ha!" But perceiving from the other's countenance that something was wrong, he changed his tone, and

added—"I hope you are well, sir? From what I heard from your nephew, who has just left me, I expected to find you in high spirits."

The miser made no reply, but signed to Jacob to leave the room, which the latter did very reluctantly. "The mortgage money has been paid, Diggs," said Mr. Scarve coldly, as soon as they were alone.

"I am sorry to hear it," replied the other—"very sorry. But feared as much from your countenance."

"Well, never mind it," replied the miser, forcing a smile. "It is a disappointment that can be borne."

"I am glad you take the matter so philosophically, sir," rejoined Diggs; "but I confess I cannot view the loss with equal indifference."

"Why, what interest, except professionally, can you feel in the matter?" said the miser coldly.

"I take as much interest in the affairs of my clients as in my own," rejoined Diggs; "and it so happens you are not the only party who may suffer by this untoward and vexatious occurrence."

"Not the only party," repeated the miser. "You perplex me."

"I will explain myself, sir," returned Diggs. "Your nephew, as I told you, has just been with me. He spoke of his hopes of an union with your daughter, and of the settlement he proposed, in such an event, to make upon her; and concluded by hoping you would assign this very estate in Flintshire to her as a marriage portion."

"But I have it not, Diggs—I have it not!" cried the miser pathetically.

"So I am sorry to learn," replied Diggs; "but——" and he slightly paused, as if calculating how far he could safely go—"you have the mortgage money."

"Mr. Diggs," replied the miser, fixing his keen grey eyes upon the attorney—"I told my nephew to-day that I would not give my daughter a farthing; and I am not one, you know, to waver in my resolution. What settlement does Philip propose to make upon her?"

"Nothing, sir," replied Diggs, affecting to be a little hurt—"nothing, without a corresponding settlement on your part. Nor could I honestly advise him to do otherwise."

"Then the match is at an end," rejoined Scarve; "and you may tell him so."

"I hope not, sir," replied the attorney; "you are both good clients, and having the interests of both sincerely at heart, I should like to see you more closely united. Your nephew would be a son to you, Mr. Scarve. He has a great regard as well as profound respect for you; and having precisely the same careful habits as yourself, your property will undergo no diminution, if it should ever come into his hands. I need not remind you of the large fortune he inherited from his father, whose will you have seen; but I may tell you—because I have no interdiction from him against so doing—that by the fortunate disposition of that money, by loans and otherwise, he

has already added twenty thousand pounds to the amount; and in a few years, if he is equally fortunate, there is no doubt he will double it."

"Philip is a very clever young man, unquestionably," said the miser, his eyes sparkling with pleasure —"there are few such."

"You may truly say so, sir," replied Diggs; "and I should hesitate, if I were you, before I threw away the opportunity now offered of so good a match—one in all respects so accordant with your taste. You will at once perceive my meaning, sir, when I say that you would scarcely respect your nephew—certainly not give him credit for the prudence he possesses—if he were to accept your daughter without some marriage portion. It is not that he wants the money, nor that he doubts your ultimate intentions respecting her, but he deems it right, as a matter of propriety and fairness, that a sum equal to his own should be given."

"And what amount does he propose to settle?" inquired the miser.

"Twenty thousand pounds," replied Diggs.

"Hum!" exclaimed Scarve. And he continued for some time wrapped in thought, during which Diggs kept his single eye fixed upon him. "Well," he said, at length; "all things considered, I am disposed to stretch a point, and to do more than I intended. I will behave handsomely to my nephew, who deserves to be so dealt with. He shall settle thirty thousand pounds — mind, thirty thousand, Diggs!—on my daughter; and I will give them fourteen thousand—the very sum I have just re-

ceived from that accursed Welsh baronet—on the day of the nuptials."

"I cannot, of course, take upon me to answer for Mr. Frewin, sir," replied Diggs, who could scarcely conceal his satisfaction, "but I hope and trust he will agree to the arrangement—indeed, I am pretty sure he will do so. He is devotedly attached to your daughter, and I am convinced he would make a sacrifice for her."

"He makes no sacrifice, sir," cried Scarve sharply —"none whatever."

"I mean merely in feeling, sir," interrupted Diggs, in a deprecatory tone; "but since we have in a measure agreed upon the matter—for I will presume Mr. Frewin's assent—I may add, it is his earnest wish that the marriage should take place as soon as possible."

"I myself am wishful it should do so," replied the miser.

"In that case there can be nothing to hinder it," rejoined Diggs, "always provided Mr. Frewin agrees to the arrangement, unless—but I presume you have consulted Miss Scarve on the subject?"

"My daughter has been accustomed to act in accordance with my wishes," returned the miser coldly.

"I am glad to hear it, sir," said Diggs. "I merely threw out the suggestion, fearing an obstacle might occur in that quarter. My apprehension was lest the young lady should not share in our good opinion of Mr. Frewin; inasmuch as she might attach a little more importance than we do to ex-

ternal appearances, forgetting the more essential qualities. I am quite of opinion that a father has a right to dispose of his daughter as he thinks fit. All laws, divine and human, give him that power, and he is perfectly justified in exercising it."

"I act as I believe for the best," replied the miser. "And now," he added, as if anxious to change the subject, "let us talk on other matters. There is the bond from Mr. Villiers; the annuity from Sir Thomas Lightfoot; and the four thousand pounds Lady Brabazon wants to borrow." And he forthwith plunged into details, into which it is unnecessary to follow him.

At the end of half-an-hour, Diggs rose to depart, and Jacob was summoned to attend him to the door. There was a significance in the porter's manner that satisfied the astute attorney he had been playing the eavesdropper. He thought it therefore expedient to make friends with him, and he accordingly slipped a crown into his hand as he went forth. Jacob did not refuse the gift, but growled out, as he fastened the door, "This, and a thousand such, shan't bribe me to betray my young missis. I overheard all their scheming, and she shall know it as well."

On returning to the parlour, he found the miser preparing to retire, and assisted him, for he was still very feeble, to get upstairs. The miser's bedroom was not a whit better furnished than the lower apartment. An old bedstead, without hangings, stood at one side, while opposite it was a washstand, of the commonest description. A number of old trunks, and one or two pictures, in a very

Jacob, meanwhile, on quitting his master, crept stealthily to the ladies' chamber, and tapped against the door. The summons was immediately answered by Hilda, who anxiously inquired what was the matter. Jacob replied, in a low tone, that he wished to say a word to her before she retired to rest. Having delivered himself thus, he stole downstairs, and Hilda, who was a good deal alarmed, almost instantly followed him. He then told her what had passed between Mr. Scarve and his attorney, concluding thus: "I ought to be ashamed of myself, I know, miss, for listenin', and it's not my habit, I assure you; but being aware that Mr. Diggs is Mr. Philip's attorney as well as master's, and couplin' his visit with what occurred this morning, I had some misgivings as to his errand, and therefore I did as I've told you."

Greatly disturbed by the intelligence, Hilda thanked the porter for his zeal, and returned noiselessly to her room, where she found relief in a plentiful flood of tears. Mrs. Clinton tried to soothe her, but it was long before she could succeed in doing so.

"What is to be done, dear aunt?" cried Hilda. "I know my father too well to doubt that, having resolved upon this hateful match, he will leave anything undone to accomplish it. But I will die sooner than give my consent."

"I scarcely know how to advise you, my dear niece," replied Mrs. Clinton. "I do not like to counsel you to disobey your father, and yet I feel he ought not to force your inclinations."

"Alas!" exclaimed Hilda, again bursting into tears, "I have no friend to turn to."

"Yes, you have one," replied Mrs. Clinton, "who will, I am sure, assist you, and protect you, if necessary. But do not question me further on the subject to-night — rest satisfied with my assurance. And now, sweet niece, dry your tears, lay your head on the pillow, and try to compose yourself to slumber. Perhaps all will be right, and there may be no occasion to apply to any one. God bless you! good night!" Hilda complied with her aunt's suggestions—but sleep shunned her eyelids.

Jacob, who was really apprehensive that an attempt would be made to break into the house that night, determined to remain on the watch, and with this view ensconced himself in the miser's arm-chair, where, however, he found it impossible to resist the approaches of the drowsy god. His slumbers were long and sound, but were at length broken by the creaking of a door. Instantly starting to his feet, he snatched up the pistol which lay on the table beside him, and presented it at the head of the intruder, who proved to be his master. Mr. Scarve was in his night-dress, over which he had hastily slipped the robe he ordinarily wore, and thus seen in the bright moonlight, for he had no candle looked almost like an apparition.

"Lord bless us!" exclaimed Jacob, lowering the pistol; "how you do frighten one! I took you for a housebreaker, and I'm not quite sure now you aren't a perturbed sperrit."

"I almost wish I was dead, Jacob," replied the miser dolefully. "I cannot sleep."

"Don't wonder at it," replied the other gruffly. "You've a bad conscience. I can sleep soundly enough, even in that *cheer*."

"I envy you, Jacob," groaned the miser.

"And well you may," rejoined Jacob; "riches don't always bring peace—especially if they've been unjustly obtained. But I'll tell you what'll make you sleep as sound as a rock. Give up all idea of marryin' your daughter to your miserly nephew, Philip Frewin. It's that as disturbs you. You know you're doin' wrong in harbourin' such a thought."

"They're all leagued against me—all!" shrieked the miser. "Scoundrel, you have been listening to what passed between me and Mr. Diggs."

"I won't deny it," replied Jacob stoutly; "I have. And I tell you you're sacrificin' your daughter. Your nephew isn't what he seems, and Mr. Diggs is helpin' him to deceive you. You'll find 'em out when it's too late."

"You are mad, or drunk, or both, Jacob!" cried Scarve fiercely.

"If I am mad, it's a very composed and collected kind of madness," rejoined Jacob; "but I should like to know which of us looks most like a madman—you, who can't rest in your bed, or me, who can sleep like a top in that *cheer!*"

"Well, well, I shan't bandy words with you," rejoined the miser, whose teeth were chattering with cold. "Is all safe?"

to deserve such treatment? But do not think you will succeed in your design. I repeat what I said yesterday. Neither entreaties nor threats shall induce me to marry my cousin."

"I will discard you, then," rejoined the miser furiously.

But finding her wholly unmoved by the menace, he commenced pouring forth a torrent of invectives against the sex in general; complaining of the anxiety and torment they occasioned all those with whom they were connected, whether in the relation of wife, sister, or daughter; charging them with wilfulness, perversity, and blindness to their own interests; and ended by ordering her off to her own chamber, whither she was very glad to retreat.

By no means satisfied with himself, he next tried to occupy his mind by referring to his account-book; but it would not do, and, unable to sit still, he paced the room to and fro. He hoped Jacob would show himself, that he might have an object to vent his anger upon; but the porter, having some notion of the storm that awaited him, kept sedulously out of the way. He then resolutely returned to the account-book, and had at last fully succeeded in fixing his attention upon it, when a knock was heard at the door, and Jacob presently afterwards appeared, and informed him that Mr. Cordwell Firebras was without. The miser slightly started at the name, but hastily ordered Jacob to admit him. A friendly greeting took place between the miser and Firebras, at which Jacob was the more surprised, in that he did not remember having seen

the latter before; but he thought, in spite of all his affected cordiality, that his master would have willingly dispensed with his visitor's company.

Warned by what had occurred on the previous night, Mr. Scarve ordered Jacob to go below, and took the precaution to see that his injunctions were obeyed. Though the porter's curiosity was considerably excited by what was going forward, he did not dare to listen, for fear of a discovery, and he accordingly whiled the time by applying to his secret store of provisions. In about an hour and a half he was summoned by his master, who told him he was going out on business, and desired him to attend him to his room, whither he proceeded.

"I suppose you want your coat, sir?" said Jacob. And opening a drawer in the chest, he took an old, sad-coloured garment from a faded handkerchief in which it was wrapped, and assisted his master to put it on. This done, he brought an old three-cornered hat, edged with tarnished lace, and dusting it, gave it to the miser, together with a crutch-handled stick. Having locked the door of the closet, removed the key, and put it in his pocket, Mr. Scarve next went through the same operation at the door communicating with the gallery.

"I shall not return till evening, Jacob," he said. "Take care of the house during my absence."

"It must be important business to keep you out so long," replied Jacob, staring at the information.

"The business *is* important," rejoined the miser; "but I wish you would check your tendency to

familiarity. It is growing upon you, and I am weary of it."

With this he descended to the lower room, and, taking some papers from Cordwell Firebras, which the latter had been reading, put them in his pocket, and they quitted the house together.

XII

Hilda's Interview with Abel Beechcroft.

JACOB lost not a moment in communicating his master's departure to his young mistress, and Hilda, on hearing it, immediately came downstairs with her aunt.

"And now, my dear niece," said Mrs. Clinton, "since such a favourable opportunity presents itself, I would advise you to apply for counsel as to how to act to the person I told you would befriend you. This letter, committed to my care by my poor sister and your mother, was written to be delivered in a case of emergency like the present—which she but too surely foresaw might arise—and it cannot fail of accomplishing its object."

"It is addressed to Mr. Abel Beechcroft," said Hilda, glancing at the inscription on the letter, as she took it from her aunt. "Why, that must be the uncle of the young man who was here the night before last. I cannot take it to *him*."

"Why not?" cried Mrs. Clinton.

"Because it would look like—but why need I

care what consequences to put upon my visit, since my heart acquits me of any improper motive," said Hilda. "Aunt, I will go—that is, I think I will answer any good purpose."

"I am sure it will," urged Mrs. Clinton.

"But if my father should accidentally return during our absence," rejoined Hilda.

"I do not think it likely he will do so," returned the aunt. "But if he should, I must bear the brunt of his displeasure. Go, my love. Something tells me the visit will be productive of great advantage to you. Jacob will accompany you."

"That I will," he replied. "I'll follow you to the world's end, if you want it."

Hilda yielded at length to her aunt's solicitations, and, having put on her walking attire, quitted the house with Jacob. Instead of going over Westminster Bridge, they proceeded to Parliament Stairs, where Jacob said he had a friend, a waterman, who would lend him a boat, in which they could cross the river. Nor did he assert more than the truth. On reaching the stairs, the first person he encountered was the friendly waterman in question, who, on learning his wishes, immediately ran down and got his skiff ready. Having placed Hilda within it, Jacob took off his coat, and plying the oars with as much skill as the best rower on the Thames could have done, speedily landed her at Lambeth, and secured the boat, where he inquired the way to Mr. Beechcroft's house. A walk of a few seconds brought them to it. Hilda's heart trembled as she knocked at the door; but she was reassured by the

kindly aspect of Mr. Jukes, who answered the summons. She stated her errand to the butler, who appeared not a little surprised, and, indeed, confounded, at the announcement of her name. After a short debate with himself, Mr. Jukes said his master was at home, and she should see him; and, without more ado, he led the way to the library, and entered it, followed by the others.

Abel was seated beside an old-fashioned bookcase, the door of which was open, disclosing a collection of goodly tomes, and had placed the book-stand, supporting the volume he was reading, in such a position as to receive the full light of the window. So much was he engaged in his studies that he did not hear their approach. In the hasty glance cast by Hilda at the pictures on the wall, the most noticeable of which was a copy of Rembrandt's "Good Samaritan," and a fine painting on the subject of "Timon of Athens," she thought she could read somewhat of the character of the owner of the house. Little time, however, was allowed her for reflection, for Mr. Jukes, advancing towards his master's chair, leaned over it and whispered a few words in his ear.

"What!—who!—who did you say?" exclaimed Abel, half-closing the book he was reading, and looking sharply and anxiously round. "Who did you say, Jukes?"

"Miss Scarve, sir," replied the butler; "she has brought you a letter."

"Tell her I won't receive it—won't open it!" cried Abel. "Why did you not send her away? What brings her here?"

"You had better put that question to her yourself, sir," replied Mr. Jukes, "for she is in this room."

"Here!" exclaimed Abel, starting to his feet. "Ah! I see—I see. O God! she is very like her mother."

"Calm yourself, I entreat, sir," said Mr. Jukes; "I would not have admitted her," he added, in a low tone, "but that she told me the letter was written by her mother, and left to be delivered to you under peculiar circumstances, which have now arisen. I couldn't resist a plea like that—nor could you, sir, I'm sure."

"A letter written to me by her mother!" cried Abel, shivering as if smitten by an ague. "Leave us, Jukes, and take that man with you."

"Come, friend," said Mr. Jukes to Jacob, who, with his crabstick under his arm, stood gazing curiously on, "you had better adjourn with me to the butler's pantry."

"Thank'ee kindly, sir," replied Jacob, in tones a little less gruff than usual, for he was somewhat awestricken; "I would rather stay with my young missis."

"But don't you see you're in the way, my good man?" rejoined Mr. Jukes impatiently. "They can't talk before us. Come along." And despite his resistance, he pushed Jacob out of the room, and closed the door after him.

"You have a letter for me, young lady, I believe," faltered Abel, in a voice hollow and broken by emotion.

"I have, sir," she replied, giving it to him.

Abel looked at the address, and another sharp convulsion passed over his frame. He, however, controlled himself by a powerful effort, and broke the seal. The perusal of the letter seemed to affect him deeply, for, staggering to his chair, he sank into it, and covering his face with his hands, wept aloud. It was some minutes before he arose. Hilda, who had watched him with much concern, was surprised to see how calm he looked. He had, indeed, regained the mastery he usually held over his feelings. "Pray be seated, young lady," he said, handing her a chair. "I would have shunned this interview if it had been in my power; but, as it has been brought about, I will not shrink from it. How can I serve you?"

Hilda then proceeded to explain the object of her visit. Abel listened to her recital with a quivering lip and flashing eye, and at its close got up, and took a quick turn round the room.

"This is only what might be expected from him —scoundrel!" he ejaculated. "Sell his daughter! —but that is nothing—he would sell his soul for gold? I beg your pardon, young lady," he added, checking himself as he saw the pain his exclamations occasioned her, "but if you knew the deep and irremediable injury inflicted on me by your father, you would pardon this outbreak of passion. He has sacrificed others without scruple, but he shall not sacrifice you. You may count on my assistance, my protection, if you choose to confide in me."

"I have my mother's injunction to confide in you, sir," she replied.

"Your mother!" exclaimed Abel, in a voice of agony. "O Hilda! what a fearful spell is there in that word!—what a host of feelings does it not summon up! I see your mother again as I remember her in her youth—beautiful as you are, more beautiful, if possible—certainly more blooming. I hear the music of her voice as I listen to yours; I feel again the charm inspired by her presence. You shall learn my history one of these days, and you will then know why your mother addressed this letter to me—why it affects me thus."

"I can partly guess the cause," returned Hilda mournfully; "but be it what it may, it is plain she felt she had a strong hold on your affections, and that she thought she could rely on you, when she could rely on no one else."

"If she thought so, she judged rightly," replied Abel. "I consider her request as a sacred injunction and will strive to comply with it. And now," he added, changing his tone, "I must tell you that your name has been brought before me of late. My nephew, Randulph Crew, who visited your father the other night, has spoken of you." Hilda slightly coloured. "He will much regret not being at home this morning," pursued Abel, "as he might have had an opportunity of further cultivating his acquaintance with you. But he is gone out with my brother."

"I hope it will not offend you to say I am glad of it," replied Hilda; "I would not willingly have met him."

"Why so?" asked Abel, who, however, looked somewhat relieved.

"Because, sir, I will be frank with you," she replied, "and own that my father attributes my increased dislike of my cousin to a predilection for your nephew."

"And may I expect equal frankness in the reply, if I ask whether there is any truth in your father's suppositions?" rejoined Abel.

"You may," she answered. "Your nephew appears a very amiable and pleasing young man; but, having seen him only for a few minutes, I cannot possibly find an interest in him beyond such as might be inspired by any stranger of equally prepossessing appearance and manners. My aversion to my cousin arises from various causes. I half suspect him of acting a very base part towards my father, who resolutely shuts his eyes to the deception."

"I will not affect to deny that I am pleased with what you say of your indifference to my nephew, Hilda," returned Abel, "because I have other views in reference to him. As to your cousin, Philip Frewin, I will make strict inquiries about him, and if your suspicions prove correct, I will myself unmask him to your father, which may perhaps put an end to the matter. He lives in Fenchurch Street, you say. It so happens that an old friend of mine, a widow lady, Mrs. Verral—a friend of your mother's, by-the-bye—resides in that street. She is an excellent woman, but a little of a busybody and a gossip, and makes it her business to

know her neighbours' concerns better than her own. I'll venture to say she is acquainted with your cousin's affairs. I haven't seen the old lady of late, because, as you may perhaps have heard, I have little intercourse with your sex—my habits, and, indeed, feelings, unfitting me for their society—but I happen to know from my brother Trussell that she is well. You had better go to her yourself. I will give you a note of introduction—though, indeed, it is not needed, for, as I have told you, she is an old friend of your mother's. In addition to gaining all the information you may require respecting your cousin, you will make a friend with whom you may take refuge, if matters—which we will not anticipate—should unhappily render such a step necessary."

"I will do as you suggest, sir," replied Hilda; "but suppose I should encounter my cousin?"

"Tell him where you are going," replied Abel; "and depend upon it, if he is not what he represents himself, he will be the first to take the alarm. I will myself institute inquiries about him in another quarter." With this, he proceeded to a table on which writing materials were placed, and hastily penned a note and gave it to Hilda. "And now, God bless you, my dear child!" he said affectionately. "If called upon by circumstances, you shall never want a father or protector in me!" He then rang the bell, and Mr. Jukes presently appeared, who informed him that Jacob had just sat down to dinner with the other servants.

"I think, sir," he added, in a low tone, "it is the

first good meal he has had for many a day, and it would be a pity to disturb him, if Miss Scarve is not in a very great hurry."

Abel appealed to Hilda, and, as she raised no objection, he proposed to her to take a turn in the garden till Jacob had finished his meal; and accordingly opened the window and led her forth. By this time Hilda had become more composed, and being quite easy with the old man, for whom indeed she felt a growing regard, she entered readily into conversation with him; and thus more than half-an-hour flew by, almost without their being aware of its flight. At the end of that time, Mr. Jukes made his appearance, and informed them that Jacob was ready. Abel attended his fair visitor to the door.

"If you do not find Mrs. Verral at home," he said, "or if anything should occur to make you wish to see me again, do not hesitate to come back. But, in any event, you shall hear from me—perhaps see me—to-morrow. God bless you, my child!" And taking her hand, he pressed it to his lips; and when Hilda withdrew it, she found it wet with tears.

While this was passing, Jacob shook the hospitable butler warmly by the hand, and then strode on before his young mistress, towards the stairs where he had left the boat. Having placed her within it, and divested himself of his coat and hat, as before, he inquired where she meant to go, and being told to London Bridge, pulled off vigorously in that direction.

XIII

The Folly on the Thames — Kitty Conway — Randulph placed in an Awkward Situation by Philip Frewin.

The Folly on the Thames, whither Beau Villiers and his party were steering their course, was a large floating house of entertainment, moored in the centre of the stream, immediately opposite old Somerset House. It was constructed in the latter part of the reign of Charles the Second; and thither the merry monarch, who was excessively fond of aquatic amusements of all kinds, would frequently repair with his courtiers and frolic dames. Thither also Queen Mary, the consort of William the Third, went on the occasion of a grand musical entertainment; and the place continued in vogue for many years, until at length, degenerating in its character, it became the haunt of a very disreputable part of the community. The Folly resembled a large one-storeyed house, very long in proportion to its width, built upon an immense barge. There was a platform at the top, defended by a strong wooden balustrade, and flanked at each corner by a little turret with a pointed top, surmounted by a small streamer. These turrets constituted small drinking and smoking rooms, and were fitted up with seats and tables. In the centre of the structure was a sort of open belvidere, covering the main staircase leading to the roof. On this a large flag was planted. The Folly

was approached from the water by steps on three sides. It was lighted by a range of large and handsome windows, and entered by two doors, one at the end, and the other at the side. Within, it contained a long music-hall with a frescoed ceiling, gilded and painted walls, an orchestra, and the necessary complement of benches, chairs, and small tables. There was, moreover, a bar, where all sorts of liquors, materials for smoking, and other tavern luxuries were dispensed. The rest of the structure was divided into a number of small apartments for private parties, and, in short, boasted every sort of accommodation afforded by a similar place of entertainment on shore. In summer it was delightful—the view of the Thames from its summit being enchanting. The coolness and freshness, combined with the enlivening influences of beauty, wine, and music, made it, on its first establishment, a charming place of recreation; and it cannot be wondered that the merry monarch, and his merrier court, found it so much to their taste.

As the party approached the aquatic hotel, they perceived a number of persons, of both sexes, seated on the roof, and in the little turret parlours, smoking, drinking, or otherwise amusing themselves; while lively strains of music proceeded from within. Several small crafts were landing their passengers, and from one, a tilt boat, there issued a very pretty young woman, though of rather bold appearance, who, as she took the hand of a young man in her ascent of the steps, displayed a remarkably neat foot and ankle. On reaching the deck,

[illegible]

"Let me see," exclaimed the old beau, placing his glass to his eye. "Ah, gadzooks, 'tis the delicious creature I mentioned to you—the little Haymarket actress, Kitty Conway!"

"Kitty Conway! where is she?" cried Trussell, who heard the remark, but whose back was towards the object of their admiration.

Sir Singleton pointed her out, and upon the instant every eye was directed towards her. Whether unable to stand so fierce a fire, or whether, as is more probable, dragged away by her companion, who did not appear to relish the notice she attracted, it is needless to inquire, but pretty Kitty suddenly vanished from their sight.

"Well, isn't she delicious?" cried Trussell to Randulph. "Egad! you have made a conquest of pretty Kitty, my boy. I saw the parting glance she gave you over her shoulder as she whisked through the door. Don't lose sight of her. You can soon put the City beau, by whom she is attended, *hors de combat*."

Further remarks were interrupted by the arrival of the boat at the steps. A strange black-muzzled fellow, in a Guernsey shirt, with bare arms and bare legs, and who was a regular attendant at the Folly, helped them to disembark; and his request to "be remembered" by the beau being met with a very munificent rejoinder, he well-nigh lost his balance in his glee, and got a tumble into the water.

The party then entered the music-hall, and just as they passed through the door, Randulph, chancing to look behind him, perceived that the stranger had likewise landed, and was mounting the steps. The novel scene, however, before him, so completely engrossed his attention, that he could think of little else. Upwards of a hundred persons of both sexes thronged the room; many of the ladies were masked, and a good deal of freedom marked their

conduct. They talked and laughed loudly and recklessly. At one end of the hall the benches were taken aside to allow Kitty Conway and her companion, with some other couples, to perform the cushion dance. At the upper end of the room stood the musicians. The party made their way towards the dancers, and the beau and Sir Singleton praised Kitty's beauty in tones so loud, and in terms of admiration so strong, as would have occasioned confusion to any young lady troubled with a more oppressive sense of bashfulness than she was. Her partner did not know whether to look pleased or annoyed. He was evidently overpowered by the presence of Beau Villiers, whom he regarded with a species of awe; and as these applauses of Kitty gave a fancied consequence to himself, he was weak enough to be gratified by them. Towards the close of the figure, a particular step, executed by the pretty actress, elicited more than usual rapture from Sir Singleton, and he called to Randulph, "Look at her, Mr. Randulph Crew. Is it not delicious?"

At the sound of this name, Kitty's partner started, and stared so hard at Randulph, that he could scarcely finish the dance.

"Upon my word, Philip Frewin, you are a very stupid partner," said the actress to him. "If you do not exert yourself more, I shall ask that handsome young fellow, who is ogling me there, to take my hand in the next set."

"I am quite fatigued, Kitty," replied Philip confusedly; "let us have some refreshment—a little rack punch, or a glass of champagne."

Kitty Conway assented, and they moved off to one of the side-tables, where a waiter speedily placed glasses before them, and opened a bottle of champagne. It must be confessed—unwilling as we are to admit it—that Randulph was not altogether proof against the undisguised admiration of the pretty actress, and that he could not help returning the tender glances she shot towards him.

Meanwhile, the performances went forward; an Irish jig followed, in which Randulph and Sir Singleton joined; this was succeeded by some comic songs; and Mr. Villiers, who did not altogether relish the entertainment, walked forth, and was soon after followed by the others. As they all stood leaning over the sides of the bark, laughing at what had occurred, and admiring the gaiety of the scene, a skiff, impelled by a vigorous rower, as was evident by the progress it made, and containing a young female, wrapped in a black silk scarf, and with raven tresses, scarcely covered by a small bonnet, floating in the breeze, rapidly neared them. Various speculations were put forth as to whether this young female would prove as pretty on a nearer inspection as she looked at a distance; but in these Randulph took little part. To speak truth, his thoughts were running upon the fair syren within; and happening to cast his eyes towards the platform above, he perceived, leaning over the balustrade, and gazing at him, the stranger!

At this juncture, Philip Frewin came forth, to see whether his boat was in readiness, and admonished the watermen, one of whom was philandering with

a buxom damsel, who was leaning over the side of the deck, that he should start immediately. He had scarcely, however, issued the order, than his eye fell upon the skiff containing the young female before mentioned, and which was now close at hand. He started as if an apparition had met his gaze, ducked down, and would have made his escape into the music-hall, if Kitty Conway had not placed herself in his way. Retreat was now impossible, and Philip's distress was heightened by the fair actress, who exclaimed, somewhat pettishly, "Why do you leave me here, sir? Why don't you hand me to the boat?"

Philip was almost at his wits' end. The skiff containing Hilda and Jacob—both of whom he had too clearly recognised, though he could not account for their appearance, unless it were a trick of the fiend to convict him—was so near, that if he complied with Kitty's request, discovery would be inevitable. A plan suddenly occurred to him, by which he hoped to free himself from risk, and place Randulph, whom he had reason to regard as a rival, in an awkward dilemma. Without apprising Kitty of his intention, he drew her forward, and bending down as low as he could to elude observation, said to Randulph, "Will you have the kindness, sir, to hand this lady into her boat? You will do me an infinite favour. I have dropped a pocket-book in the music-hall, and must go back to search for it."

Randulph was a good deal surprised by the proposal, but he unhesitatingly consented; and,

taking Kitty's hand, which she very graciously accorded, rewarding his attention by a slight squeeze, led her down the steps. All this occurred to the infinite amusement of Trussell, who stood a little back near the door, ogling a rather pretty damsel, and to the no slight chagrin of Sir Singleton, who, guessing the intention of Philip Frewin, had pushed forward to offer his services, but found himself supplanted. But these were not the only witnesses of the scene. By this time, the skiff, containing Hilda, had come up, and with a pang of jealous feeling, neither to be accounted for nor controlled, she beheld Randulph handing the pretty actress, whose character she could scarcely mistake, down the steps. Jacob saw what was passing as well as herself; but, having no jealousy to divert his attention from other matters, he detected Philip Frewin, even in his disguise, and, resting on his oars, exclaimed, "Look! miss, look!—there is your cousin Philip. Is that the dress he wore yesterday? I told master he wasn't what he seemed. Look at him, I say!"

But Hilda was too much agitated to heed these exclamations. She could see nothing but Randulph and the pretty actress. Nor was she without embarrassment on her own account; for Mr. Cripps, having recognised her, pointed her out to his master, and the beau, being much struck with her beauty, favoured her with a very insolent stare. But if Randulph had been guilty of disloyalty towards the object of his affections, his punishment was not long delayed; for, as he handed Kitty into

The Folly on the Thames.

the boat, which was steadied by the black-muzzled Jack before mentioned, his gaze encountered that of Hilda, and he was instantly filled with confusion. He tried to disengage himself from the actress, who, however, sportively detained him, and unable to retreat, he cut a most ridiculous figure. Indeed, he was not a little relieved, though he felt how much he should sink in her esteem, when he saw Hilda bend forward and order Jacob, who continued resting on his oars, to pass on. He continued gazing after the skiff till it was out of sight; but Hilda did not look back.

Meanwhile, as Philip Frewin did not make his appearance, Kitty Conway became very impatient, and turning a deaf ear to all the high-flown compliments showered upon her by Sir Singleton Spinke, entreated Randulph to go and see what her friend was doing. The young man could not very well refuse compliance with the request, and he accordingly entered the music-hall, and returned in a few minutes with Philip, who, finding the coast clear, recovered his composure, and tendering his thanks, in a very abject manner, to Randulph, got into the boat with Kitty, and ordered the men to row to Savoy Stairs. Randulph was too angry with himself, and now too indifferent to the fascinations of the pretty actress, to return the tender glance with which she favoured him on her departure.

The incident, however, afforded abundant merriment to his companions, who were greatly diverted by his looks, which they attributed to jealousy, and they endeavoured to remove the feeling by assuring

him that Kitty had exhibited a decided preference for him. His uneasiness was not relieved by the admiration expressed of the miser's daughter by Beau Villiers, nor was Trussell altogether pleased to find the beau so much captivated. That Hilda should have passed at the precise juncture seemed to surprise everybody.

XIV

Randulph's Interview with Cordwell Firebras in the Cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

SHORTLY after this, the party entered their boat and returned to Whitehall Stairs. Randulph had been so much engrossed by his own feelings, that he forgot the stranger, and only called him to mind a few minutes after he had landed, and when it was too late to look for him. He did not, however, forget his appointment with the writer of the mysterious letter, and, regardless of the construction that might be put upon it, told his uncle he had a particular engagement, which he must keep, at six o'clock. Trussell smiled significantly at the announcement, but made no remark, and proposed that they should all dine at one of the French ordinaries in Suffolk Street. Beau Villiers pleaded an engagement, but Sir Singleton acquiesced, and the trio repaired to the ordinary, where an excellent dinner was set before them.

Mindful of his appointment, Randulph, in spite

of the jokes of his companions, who strove to detain him, got up from table at five o'clock, and took his way past Charing Cross and Whitehall towards the Abbey. He could not resist the impulse that prompted him to pass through the Little Sanctuary, and felt half-disposed to call at the miser's and offer some explanation of his conduct to Hilda. Though the absurdity of the notion caused him to abandon it almost as soon as formed, he lingered before the house for a few minutes, in the hope of discerning some of its inmates, but was disappointed. He then entered Peter Pokerich's shop, to inquire the way to the Abbey cloisters.

It chanced that the little barber was about to take an evening stroll with the fair Thomasine, who was waiting for him, and he offered to show Randulph the way; but this the young man, who had his own reasons for not desiring the attendance of the inquisitive barber, declined, though in such a way as to excite Peter's curiosity, who secretly determined to follow him. As soon as Randulph was gone, he mentioned his design to the fair Thomasine, who was nothing loth to accompany him, and they set out together, taking special care to keep out of Randulph's view. The young man shaped his course towards the Abbey, and, skirting its western extremity, passed under the archway leading to the playground of Westminster School. Here he paused, and, addressing a porter, was directed towards another archway, through which he passed, and entered the cloisters. On seeing this, Peter, still accompanied by his fair companion,

ran forward, and finding that Randulph was walking in the south ambulatory, they struck into the west, being still able to watch him through the open columns.

Randulph, meanwhile, unconscious that he was the object of such scrutiny, slowly traversed the ambulatory, and, charmed with the exquisite groined arches of its roof, hoary with age, and the view afforded, through the shafted windows looking into the quadrangle, of the reverend buttresses and of the Abbey, almost forgot the object that brought him thither. He was arrested at the eastern extremity by the ancient inscriptions and brasses, pointing out the resting-places of the old abbots, Laurentius Gislesbertus, and Vitalis, when a heavy footstep sounded on his ear, and looking up he beheld the stranger. Before he could recover his surprise at this unexpected apparition, the new-comer advanced towards him, and with a slight inclination of the head, and a singularly significant smile, said, "So you have kept your appointment with me, Mr. Randulph Crew."

"Are you, then, Mr. Cordwell Firebras?" exclaimed Randulph in surprise.

"I am so called," replied the other.

"I was little aware, sir, when I saw you this morning at the barber's, how soon and how strangely we should be brought together again," rejoined Randulph; "but this in some measure accounts for the manner in which you have haunted me throughout the day. Perhaps you will now explain your motive for doing so, as well as for summoning me hither?"

"All in good time, young gentleman," replied Cordwell Firebras gravely. "Before I advert to my own concerns, let me say a word on yours. Answer me truly—have you not conceived an affection for Hilda Scarve? Nay, you need not answer. Your hesitation convinces me you have. Circumstances led you into acting very injudiciously this morning at the Folly, and I fear your conduct may have produced an unfavourable impression on Hilda's mind—for I watched her closely. But heed not this. I will set all to rights. I have much influence with her father. He designs her for another—the apish gallant of the pretty actress who fascinated you this morning. But you shall have her nevertheless—on one condition."

"Despite the singularity of your address, there is an earnestness in your manner that inspires me with confidence in you, sir," rejoined Randulph; "the rather, that you told me this morning you were an old friend of my father's. I will freely confess to you that I am captivated by the miser's daughter, and that I would hazard much to obtain her. Now, on what condition do you propose to make her mine?"

"You shall learn presently," replied Firebras evasively. "Let us take a turn along the cloisters," he added, moving slowly forward. They marched on together in silence until they reached the eastern angle of the ambulatory, when Firebras, suddenly halting, laid his heavy hand upon Randulph's arm, and fixed a searching look upon him. "Young man," he said, "I will tell you what you must do to gain the miser's daughter."

"What, what?" demanded Randulph.

"You must join the Jacobite party," replied Firebras; "to which her father belongs—to which your father belonged—and to which your mother also belongs."

Surprise kept Randulph silent. But neither he nor his companion were aware that this treasonable proposition had been overheard by Peter Pokerich and the fair Thomasine, who, having stolen upon them unperceived, were ensconced behind the shafts of the adjoining arches.

XV

Mrs. Clinton's Alarm — The Miser's Unexpected Return—The Disappearance of the Mortgage Money — Effrontery of Philip Frewin and Diggs.

Day wore on, and Mrs. Clinton, wondering at her niece's prolonged stay, became extremely apprehensive lest Mr. Scarve should return before her, and discover her absence. She had just despatched her scanty dinner, having waited more than an hour for Hilda, removed the things, that they might not excite the miser's suspicion in case of his sudden return, and sat down to her needlework, on which she was diligently, though almost mechanically employed, when she was startled by a sound like the opening of a window, followed by a stealthy tread, in one of the rooms upstairs. The idea of robbers instantly occurred to her, for she recollected

the large amount of gold in the house, as well as the public manner in which it had been paid, and she felt how likely it was an attempt might be made to carry it off, especially if it had been ascertained that she was alone in the house. She had heard of murders committed in lone habitations in broad day, and, in most cases, upon defenceless females like herself; and, filled with indescribable terror, she rushed forth with the intention of giving the alarm. Before she gained the passage, a knock was heard at the street door, and hurrying to it, she hastily, and with trembling hands, unfastened it, and beheld the miser. If she was startled by his appearance, he was not less so by hers; and, fixing a terrible look upon her, he demanded why Jacob had not let him in. Receiving no answer, he pushed her roughly into the passage, and, clapping the door hastily to, proceeded to the parlour.

Poor Mrs. Clinton scarcely knew what to do, but at last she followed him, and found him pacing to and fro within the room like one distracted. "Where is Jacob?" he cried, running towards her, and seizing her arm. "Is the rascal gone out without leave? Why don't you speak, woman! Have you dared to send him out?—or has Hilda?"

"He will be back directly," replied Mrs. Clinton, almost frightened out of her senses. "I expected him long before this."

"Then he *is* gone out," cried the miser, as if he was unwilling to credit what he heard; "and Hilda, I suppose, is gone with him?"

Mrs. Clinton returned a terrified affirmative.

"And where, in the devil's name, are they gone to?" roared the miser.

"I am not at liberty to say," replied Mrs. Clinton.

"I *will* have an answer!" cried the miser, glaring at her as if he would annihilate her. "Where is she gone?"

"You will extort nothing from me by this violence," returned Mrs. Clinton firmly.

"Then you shall quit my house to-night!" he rejoined fiercely. "I will not have my authority set at naught. Seek another home, madam, and another protector." The poor lady hung her head, but made no reply. "Mrs. Clinton," he continued, with forced calmness, "I put it to yourself—and unless I am altogether mistaken in you, you will not be insensible to the appeal—I put it to you, I say, whether when I demand, as a father, to know what has become of my daughter, you can reconcile it to your conscience not to tell me."

"I *will* tell you thus much, sir," she replied, after a pause—"Hilda has been induced to take this step solely in consequence of your determination to unite her to her cousin. She is gone to consult a friend."

"What friend?" cried the miser, springing towards her. "I insist upon knowing."

"She is gone to see Mr. Abel Beechcroft," replied Mrs. Clinton.

If a heavy blow had been dealt him, the unhappy man could not have been more staggered than by this information. He turned away in confusion, muttering, "Abel Beechcroft! Why should she go to him?"

"Because her poor mother left a letter to be delivered to him if circumstances should require it," rejoined Mrs. Clinton.

"And you gave her that letter?" cried the miser.

"I did," she replied.

"And you sent her to her father's bitterest enemy for advice?" he continued. "It is well—it is well!" and he strode to the side door, as if with the intention of going up to his bedroom.

Up to this moment, Mrs. Clinton had forgotten the circumstance that had so recently alarmed her; but she now recalled it, and ran after him, crying, "Sir, sir!"

"What does the woman want?" demanded the miser, turning fiercely upon her.

The answer stuck in her throat. Dreading to provoke a fresh explosion of rage, she muttered some unintelligible excuse, and retired.

The miser, meanwhile, having obtained access to his chamber, threw his hat upon the bed, passed on, and unlocked the door of the closet. Marching up to the large chest in which he had deposited the bags of gold on the previous night, he sat down upon it, and was for some time lost in deep and painful reflection. He then rose, and taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, applied one of them to the lock of the chest. It would not turn, and, imagining that he must have made some mistake, he drew it out and tried another. This, however, did not fit at all; and returning the first, he perceived, on examination, that it was the right one. Again applying it, and proceeding more

carefully, he found, to his surprise and dismay, that the chest was not locked. Well knowing he had not left it in this state, he felt convinced that something must be wrong, and it was long before he could prevail upon himself to raise the lid. When he did so, he started back with a cry of anguish and despair. The chest was empty! For some minutes he remained as if transfixed, with his hands stretched out, his mouth wide open, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, and fixed upon the void where his treasure should have been. At length he shrieked in accents of despair, "I have been robbed — robbed of my gold! — robbed— robbed! It is a wicked thing—a cruel thing—to rob me! Others do not love gold as I love it. I love it better than wife, child, mistress—better than life itself! Would that they had killed me, rather than take my gold! Oh! those fair shining pieces—so broad, so bright, so beautiful!—what has become of them?"

After a pause, during which he experienced the acutest mental anguish, he looked around to see how the robbery could have been effected. A moment's examination showed him that the iron bars in front of the little window opposite the chest had been removed.

"The villains must have found entrance here!" he cried, rushing towards the window. And clambering up an old oaken bureau that stood near it, he pushed it wide open, and, stretching his long scraggy neck through it, gazed into the little garden beneath.

Unable to discover anything, he drew back and, casting his eyes over the bureau, perceived that the dust with which it was covered had been slightly brushed away; but whether by himself or the depredators, it was now, of course, impossible to determine. A bottle standing on one corner of the bureau had not been removed. It was clear that the plunderers had gone direct to the chest, of which they must have possessed a key, for the lock, though strained, had not been forced. Maddened by these reflections, and unable to account for the occurrence, he again vented his fury in words. "I have it!" he shrieked; "it is that accursed Welsh baronet who has robbed me. He paid me the money in this public way only to delude me. I'll charge him with the robbery—I'll prove it against him—I'll hang him! Oh! it would delight me to hang him! I would give a thousand pounds to see it done! A thousand pounds! What is that to the fourteen thousand I have lost? I shall go mad, and it were happy for me to do so. Philip Frewin will refuse to marry my daughter. Her portion is gone—gone! Why was I tempted forth with Firebras! I ought to have taken my seat on that chest—to have eaten my meals upon it—to have slept upon it! Night nor day should I have quitted it! Fool that I have been! I have been rightly served—rightly served! And yet it is hard upon me, an old man, to lose all I held dear—very hard!" And falling upon his knees, with his hands clasped together, beside the vacant chest, he wept aloud.

This paroxysm of rage and grief having subsided, he again rose and descended to the parlour, where he found Mrs. Clinton anxiously waiting his reappearance. She instantly divined what had happened, and retreated before him as he advanced, almost fearing from his looks that he would do her a violence. Shaking his clenched hand, and foaming at the mouth, he attempted to discharge a volley of imprecations against her; but rage took away the power of speech, and he stood gesticulating and shaking before her — a frightful and pitiable spectacle.

"For Heaven's sake, sir, compose yourself," she cried, "or you will have a fit of some dangerous illness. You terrify me to death."

"I am glad of it," he shrieked. "I have been robbed—the mortgage money is gone—the fourteen thousand pounds. D'ye hear, woman? I've been robbed, I say—robbed!"

"I feared as much," replied Mrs. Clinton; "but the robbery cannot have been long effected, for just before you knocked at the door, I heard a window creak, as I thought, in your room."

"You did!" screamed the miser. "And why did you not tell me this before? I might have caught them—might have got back the spoil."

"If you hadn't frightened me so much about Hilda, I should have told you," replied Mrs. Clinton, in a deprecatory tone; "but your violence put it out of my head."

"Hell and fiends!" ejaculated the miser; "what is Hilda—what are fifty daughters compared with

my gold? If you had enabled me to recover it I would have forgiven you all the rest. Don't stand trembling there, fool! but come with me, and let us see whether we can discover any traces of the robbers!" So saying, he hurried towards a small back door in the passage, the bolts of which were so rusty that he had considerable difficulty in removing them; and this effected, he passed into the garden.

A most miserable and neglected place it was, and almost wholly overgrown with long rank grass, such as is to be seen in some City churchyards. But it had once been prettily laid out, as was proved by the lines of box bordering the flower-beds, and the trellised arbour and greenhouse. The appearance of the latter made the desolation of the place complete. The glass was removed from the frames, one of the walls had been pulled down, and the bricks and plaster were lying scattered about, together with a heap of broken flower-pots, and a number of worn-out and battered gardening implements; the arbour was covered with the net-like folds of a dead creeper, and the trellis-work was decayed and falling to pieces; the little window, to which access had been gained by the robbers, was on the upper storey, and about sixteen feet from the ground. The miser gazed anxiously and inquiringly at it. All the lower windows, including that of the parlour which he usually occupied, were closely barred, and had evidently not been disturbed. Those in the attics were boarded up; while of the remainder in the first floor, only the small one in question was open.

On examining the ground beneath it, he found footprints upon the soil and on the crushed grass, and, as far as he could ascertain, two or three persons must have assisted at the robbery. He traced the footprints across the garden to a wall, about six feet high, at the back of which was a narrow passage, communicating between the adjoining house and the area in front of Westminster Abbey; and here, from certain indications in the soil, he had no doubt that the depredators had got over. His vociferations while conducting the search brought some of the inmates of the next house into the passage, and they told him they had seen and heard nothing, but begged him to come round and satisfy himself. This he instantly did, and found their representations perfectly correct. The only proof of the robbers having made their approach by the passage, rested in the fact of the door being left open. His investigations ended, the miser, who made no remark while conducting them, went back to his own house. To his surprise, he found that his daughter and Jacob had returned. The latter looked greatly disconcerted, and continued twirling his hat between his fingers, but Hilda advanced towards him.

"I am greatly distressed to hear of your loss, father," she said.

"And to whom am I to attribute it?" he rejoined bitterly. "If you had remained at home, and Jacob had been on the watch, it would not have happened."

"Perhaps not," she rejoined; "but I am not

wholly to blame. It was your unkindness that compelled me to take this step."

"Well, and what does good Abel Beechcroft—kind Abel Beechcroft say?" cried the miser tauntingly. "What does he advise?—will he receive you?—will he adopt you?—will he give you to his nephew Randulph? He is welcome to do so if he pleases."

"Do not let us speak on this subject now, father," rejoined Hilda; "you have too much upon your mind without it. I pray you to believe that I have been guilty of no wilful disobedience towards you."

"Pshaw!" cried the miser contemptuously; "I will not have my patience abused by such idle assertions. But, as you say, we will discuss the matter another time. Answer me only one question—have you seen Randulph Crew?"

"I have," replied Hilda, blushing deeply.

"At his uncle's?" demanded the miser.

"No," she rejoined; "but in a situation, and under circumstances that, if I had entertained the slightest regard for him, would have effectually obliterated it."

"We saw your nephew at the same time, sir," interposed Jacob, who had now regained his self-possession.

"Where did you see him?" asked the miser.

"At the Folly on the Thames," replied Jacob. "He was not in the miserable dress he wore on his visit to you, but in a fine suit and handsome peruke. I told you he was playin' you false; and if I am not deceived, he was on good terms with the gay lady

to whom Mr. Randulph Crew was payin' attention, and of whom Miss Hilda is so jealous!"

"Jacob!" she exclaimed, again colouring.

"Nay, no offence, miss," he returned; "but you know it is the truth."

"What idle story is this?" exclaimed the miser incredulously.

Jacob's reply was cut short by a knock at the door.

"Are you at home, sir?" he asked.

"Yes—yes!" replied the miser; "in my present frame of mind I care not whom I see."

Jacob then departed, and in a few seconds returned, with a countenance fraught with vexation and surprise, ushering in Diggs and Philip Frewin. The latter was dressed in the same miserable suit, the same old wig, and the same old shoes with high quarters, that he had worn on the preceding day. The visitors appeared struck with the embarrassed air of the miser and his family, and Diggs inquired the cause of it.

"Before I explain what has happened to myself, Mr. Diggs," said Scarve, "I think it right to state that my servant, Jacob Post, declares he saw my nephew on board the Folly on the Thames this morning, and very differently dressed from what he is at present."

"I saw him, not two hours ago," replied Jacob.

"Two hours ago must have been half-past two," rejoined Diggs, taking out his watch, "and at that time he was with me. You must, therefore, be mistaken, my good friend."

"I am quite at a loss to conceive what Jacob can mean," said Philip; "but I certainly was with Mr. Diggs at the time specified, as he has just stated."

"You know well enough what I mean, Mr. Philip," rejoined Jacob gruffly—"you know you're deceivin' your uncle."

Mr. Diggs smiled at the miser, and shrugged his shoulders.

"They're in league together, sir," said Jacob; "if you don't believe me, ask Miss Hilda if she didn't see him."

"I certainly thought I saw Philip," said Hilda; "but I confess I was too much confused at the time to observe accurately."

"May I ask how my fair cousin chanced to be in a situation to make such observations?" inquired Philip.

"Ay, you may well ask that!" added the miser.

"It can matter little why I was there," replied Hilda; "nor do I conceive myself called upon to answer the question."

"I can give you no explanation, Philip," said Scarve, "for I have received none myself. My daughter has chosen to go out without leave during my absence, and Jacob has accompanied her. I profess myself wholly in the dark as to where she has been."

"That is not literally true, father," replied Hilda, "for I have already admitted that I have been to Mr. Abel Beechcroft. And I may now add," she continued, looking at Philip, "that I have called upon Mrs. Verral in Fenchurch Street."

"Mrs. Verral!" exclaimed Philip, starting.

"Ay, you may well look surprised and dismayed, sir," pursued Hilda; "you anticipate what is to follow. She has made your real character and circumstances known to me. Father, your nephew is not more false in outward appearance than in reality. He is a ruined man, seeking an alliance with me only to repair his broken fortunes."

"It is necessary for me now to interpose, Miss Scarve," said Diggs. "No one can be better acquainted with your cousin's affairs than I am; and so far from being a ruined man, or in the slightest degree embarrassed, he is at this moment worth half-a-million of money."

"Do you hear that?" cried the miser triumphantly.

"I shall not speak of myself," said Philip.

"No, you had better not," interrupted Jacob.

"Peace, sirrah!" cried the miser. "There is no need of assertions, nephew. I am quite satisfied. But what brings you here?"

"We come to conclude the marriage settlement, sir," rejoined Diggs. "My client is anxious to expedite the match."

"I regret to tell you a very unfortunate accident has just occurred, which will prevent my giving the sum I intended," said the miser.

"How so, sir?" cried the attorney, with a disappointed look.

"That's right, sir," said Jacob, drawing near his master, and, twitching his coat tail, he whispered in his ear, "touch 'em up on that."

"Be quiet, sirrah!" cried the miser aloud. "To put the matter at rest," he added to the attorney, "I must inform you, that during my absence I have been plundered of the whole of the large sum paid me yesterday."

"What!" exclaimed Philip, turning very pale, "the fourteen thousand pounds?"

Mr. Scarve replied in the affirmative.

"God bless me! my dear sir, you don't say so?" cried Diggs.

"Yes, I do," rejoined the miser; "every jot of it is gone."

"What an unheard-of robbery!" exclaimed the attorney—"but it must be inquired into. When did it happen—and how? Pray give me all the particulars. I must set the officers to work immediately."

"No," replied the miser mournfully—"it is gone, and employing thief-takers and constables won't bring it back again; but, on the contrary, will involve further loss of money, as well as of time and patience. I meant to give it to my daughter on her marriage. But, as I have lost it, she must go without a portion."

"Without a portion, Mr. Scarve!" exclaimed Diggs. "The loss of fourteen thousand pounds is heavy, it is true, but it falls more lightly upon you than it would on most men. You have still wealth sufficient to make the settlement you proposed upon your daughter without feeling it."

"Pardon me, Mr. Diggs," returned the miser; "I proposed to give my daughter a particular sum of

money, which I had in contemplation at the time of making the offer. Of this I have been feloniously deprived, and it is no longer in my power to fulfil my agreement."

"Well, my dear uncle," said Philip, "sooner than——"

"I know what your generosity prompts you to say, Mr. Frewin," interrupted Diggs; "but I have a duty to you as well as to my worthy client and friend, Mr. Scarve, and I must say, that if he departs from his word, on the present plea, I cannot advise you to proceed with the match."

"I have not the money to give, Philip," said the miser piteously.

"Nay, uncle, if you put it on that footing, I myself must retract," rejoined Philip. "I am not ignorant of your wealth."

"Nobody doubts it," remarked Jacob, "or you wouldn't be so urgent for the match. Stick to your determination, sir," he added to his master. "Don't give your daughter anything, and you'll soon see how the gentleman will hang fire."

"Leave the room, sirrah!" cried the miser angrily. And Jacob moved towards the door; but he did not go out.

"Before I am disposed of in this way, father, and without my own consent," said Hilda, "I must beg that Mr. Philip Frewin's character may be fully investigated; that you will hear what I have to say on the subject; and what Mrs. Verral has to say."

"I will hear nothing!" cried the miser furiously.

"You are acting under the advice of Abel Beechcroft. Mrs. Verral is a friend of his. He sent you to her. Can you deny it?"

"I cannot," replied Hilda.

"Mrs. Verral may malign me as much as she thinks fit," said Philip boldly. "But, fortunately, my character stands on too firm a basis to be shaken by a malicious woman's aspersions. I must entreat, sir," he added, turning with an appearance of candour towards his uncle, "that you will investigate this matter; that you will not put faith in Mr. Abel Beechcroft's assertions, or in those of Mrs. Verral; but inquire among my friends—among those who know me well—as to how I stand. It is perhaps useless to refer to Mr. Diggs."

"Not at all," replied the miser. "As I said before, I am quite satisfied with his assurance."

"And I can give it most heartily, sir," replied the attorney. "Excepting yourself, I do not know a more careful, prudent, sagacious man than my client, Mr. Philip Frewin. I feel called upon, by these attacks on his character, to say thus much for him. And I can do what his calumniators cannot—I can give you proof of what I assert. I suspect, sir, you will find when you look into the matter, that some scheme is hatching against you."

"To be sure he will," cried Jacob; "and he will find out who's hatchin' it too!"

"Nephew," said the miser, taking Philip's hand, "I am quite satisfied of the rectitude of your conduct, and the stability of your position."

"Father," cried Hilda, "you are deceived. You are the dupe of a designer." But the miser turned a deaf ear to her, and exchanged a few words in a low tone with Philip and Diggs. Soon afterwards, as they took their departure, he accompanied them to the street door, and fastened it after them.

XVI

Lady Brabazon deposits her Diamonds with the Miser — Gallantry of the Latter — He discovers the Contriver of the Robbery of the Mortgage Money.

When Mr. Scarve returned, the parlour was vacant —Hilda and her aunt having retired to their own room, and Jacob having descended to the cellar to get out of the way. The miser mounted to the ladies' room, and seeing the key in the door, turned it, and took it out. This done, he sat down in his chair, and remained for nearly two hours pondering on the events of the day. He was still wrapped in painful meditation, when a loud knock was heard without. Before an answer could be returned, the summons was repeated; the street door was opened by Jacob, footsteps resounded along the passage, and, as the miser raised his head in surprise, Lady Brabazon was announced. It is quite certain that, if Mr. Scarve had been consulted, he would have refused her ladyship admittance. But as it was not now in his power to

deny himself, he rose with the best grace he could assume to receive her. Jacob received a nod, and withdrew.

"Well, Mr. Scarve," said Lady Brabazon, "I am come to know whether I can have the four thousand pounds to-night."

"Impossible, your ladyship—impossible!" replied the miser. "If you will pay me twice the interest agreed upon—it cannot be. I have suffered a very heavy loss to-day—a very heavy loss, indeed."

"Poh—poh! that is always the way with you usurers," replied Lady Brabazon. "You are always suffering some heavy loss. But you don't expect me to believe you. You take a great deal too good care of your money to lose it. I must have a thousand pounds for a special purpose to-night. And if you will not let me have the four thousand, I must have the smaller amount, and on the security of these jewels." And she produced a case of diamonds. "You see," she added, displaying them, "they are worth nearly double the amount."

"They are very brilliant," replied the miser, gazing at them with the eye of a connoisseur. "But I cannot lend your ladyship the money."

"Mr. Scarve," said Lady Brabazon, "I have a debt to pay to-night, and if I do not discharge it, my character will be entirely lost."

"Your ladyship's character as a punctual paymaster will scarcely suffer by the delay of a night," said Scarve drily.

"But this is a debt of honour!" rejoined Lady Brabazon. "I will redeem my jewels in less than a week."

"Oh, if it is a debt of honour, that is quite another thing," said the miser. "This is certainly a magnificent set of diamonds. Your ladyship must look vastly well in them. Favour me by putting them on."

"Certainly, Mr. Scarve, if you desire it," replied Lady Brabazon condescendingly.

"I don't know which to admire most—your ladyship or the diamonds," observed the miser gallantly.

"The old fool has fallen in love with me," thought Lady Brabazon. "I must improve the advantage I have gained. You are very complaisant, Mr. Scarve," she added aloud, and with one of her bewitching smiles—a smile which, in her younger days, had never failed of execution.

"It would be strange if I were not, to so fascinating a person as your ladyship," replied the miser, with a strange leer, that sat very ill on his withered features.

Lady Brabazon cast down her eyes. "I almost forget what brought me hither," she observed, after a slight pause, during which she hoped the miser would follow up his gallant commencement.

"A proof it cannot be of great importance," rejoined Scarve; "but your ladyship has asked me a favour, and I will beg one in return. I have been disappointed in my dearest expectations of late. My daughter will not marry according to my

wishes. What shall I do? I am too old to marry again."

"Scarcely," replied her ladyship, trying to force a blush, but decidedly failing in the attempt.

"I will put a case," continued the miser, "merely for consideration. Suppose I were to offer myself to a person of your ladyship's rank—and in your ladyship's position, what sort of reception should I be likely to meet with?"

"That, I should say, would depend entirely upon the settlement you proposed to make, Mr. Scarve," replied Lady Brabazon, in a business-like tone. "You are reported to be immensely rich. You have some misunderstanding with your daughter, you say—which I can readily conceive—daughters are so very unmanageable—there is my Clementina, for instance, the sweetest temper in the world, but she gives me an infinity of trouble. But, as I was saying, you are immensely rich—money is no object to you; if, therefore, you were to settle upon a lady in my position somewhere about a hundred thousand pounds, but not less—I think—mind, I only think—for I offer a very hasty and ill-considered opinion—I think, however, she might be induced to accept you."

"Rather a large sum to pay for a wife at my time of life, your ladyship," observed the miser drily.

"Not a fraction more than would be required, believe me, my good sir," replied Lady Brabazon.

"Then I must abandon any views I may have entertained of an exalted alliance," sighed the miser. "But suppose we take another view of the

case. Perhaps for a hundredth part of the sum there would be no necessity for marriage at all."

"That is a view of the case which I cannot for a moment contemplate, Mr. Scarve," said her ladyship, with a glance of indignation. "Allow me to remind you that I came here on business."

"True," replied the miser, in some confusion. "These diamonds are certainly very brilliant. Your ladyship shall have the sum you require upon them. And we will talk about the other matters at another time."

With this, he unlocked the little chest beneath the table, and producing a small tin cash-box, took from it a rouleau of goldsmiths' notes, counted them, and delivered them to her ladyship.

Lady Brabazon twisted the notes carelessly between her fingers, and then placed them in her bag; after which she divested herself of the diamonds, gave them to the miser, and at the same time, as if to show that she was not offended with him beyond the possibility of reconciliation, she accorded him her snow-white hand, which he pressed to his lips. This ceremony performed, he ushered her to the street door, where her carriage was waiting, and bowed her to its steps. "Mr. Villiers'," said Lady Brabazon to the footman, as he closed the door. "The odious wretch!" she added to herself, "to dare to make such a proposal to me! However, I have got the money."

As the miser returned to the parlour, he rubbed his skinny hands together, and muttered laughingly to himself, "So she affects virtuous indignation as

if I didn't know she only wants the money for her lover, Beau Villiers. But I will try her yet more strongly. She is certainly a fine woman—a very fine woman. What do you want, sirrah?" he added, raising his eyes, and perceiving Jacob standing before him.

"Don't you mean to take some steps about this robbery?" asked the porter.

"What's that to you, rascal?" rejoined the miser angrily. "You can watch the stable when the steed's stolen, can you? You shall quit my service in a week."

"No, I won't," replied Jacob doggedly. "This mornin', I'd have quitted you with pleasure, but now I'm sorry for you. You've been unfortunate, and I won't go."

"Curse your pity!" cried the miser. "I won't be plagued with you any longer."

"You're not in a fit condition to judge for yourself just now," returned Jacob. "Think it over about discharging me when you're calmer. I'm sorry for you, I tell you—that is, I'm sorry for your loss, though I hope it may soften your ob*dur*ate heart towards your daughter. If you do turn me away, I hope you'll give me a recommendation to Mr. Abel Beechcroft. Ah! his is a place worth livin' in. It would do you good to see the dinner I sat down to to-day with the servants. There was a cold sir*line* of beef, a hot potato-pie, a piece of pickled pork, and as much strong ale as I chose to drink."

"Peace, sirrah!" cried Scarve. "What satisfac-

tion can it be to me to hear how a profuse gentleman wastes his substance on a set of thankless hirelings."

"They're not thankless," rejoined Jacob; "they all love him, and speak well of him."

"And what is their opinion worth?" sneered Scarve. "Full pockets are better than the empty praises of a set of idle pampered menials."

"I don't think so," replied Jacob; "and I only wish I was such a pampered menial as Mr. Jukes."

"Well, I'll recommend you to Mr. Beechcroft with all my heart," rejoined Scarve; "and I wish he may take you, for I couldn't do him a greater disservice. You'll soon eat him out of house and home. But come with me to my room." And leading the way upstairs, he pointed to the open window and the empty chest, asking Jacob, with a bitter sneer, "whether he could make anything of them."

Jacob gazed curiously at the window for some time without offering a remark, and then proceeded to examine the chamber. All at once his eye alighted upon a small piece of paper, which he instantly picked up. A few lines were traced upon it in pencil; but, before he could ascertain their import, the paper was snatched from him by his master, who read as follows:—

"It must be done this morning. The money is in a chest in the dressing-room, which is accessible from the little garden at the back of the house. You can reach the garden by a small entry opening upon the area in front of the Abbey. A rope ladder will do the rest. Alarm no one if you can help it; and, above all, use no violence, whatever may

happen. If you are discovered, I will take care no harm befalls you."

No signature was attached to this mysterious document, neither was it directed. The upper part of it had likewise been torn off.

"You had better let me take the letter to Tom Blee, the thief-taker," said Jacob. "He'll make something of it, I'll warrant you."

"No," replied the miser, who remained gazing upon the paper, apparently wrapped in thought; "I shall stir no further in the matter."

"Well, if I was disposed to turn housebreaker," rejoined Jacob, "you're just the person I'd begin business with. I should feel sure of gettin' off easy."

The miser raised his eyes, and fixed them sternly on him.

"Take care what you say, Jacob," he remarked. "Many a man has been hanged for lighter words than you have just uttered."

He then pointed to the door, and Jacob withdrew. After remaining by himself nearly an hour, he prepared to go downstairs. As he passed his daughter's chamber, he heard her talking to her aunt, and put his hand into his pocket to see that the key was safe. Repairing to the parlour, he called to Jacob to bring him something to eat. A little cold meat and bread were placed before him by the porter, of which he partook very sparingly, although he had eaten nothing since the morning, and quenched his thirst with a glass of water. The eatables removed, he took out his account-book, and some other papers,

and began to occupy himself with them. About eight o'clock another knock was heard at the door, and Jacob came to tell him Mr. Cordwell Firebras was without, having come by appointment to see him. "Admit him," replied the miser.

Thus empowered, Jacob departed, and presently afterwards returned with the individual in question.

"I am punctual, you see, Mr. Scarve," said Firebras, with a smile, as he entered the room.

"You are, sir," replied the miser gravely. And while his visitor threw himself into a chair, he got up to ascertain that Jacob descended into the cellar.

"And now, Mr. Scarve," said Firebras, "let us proceed at once to business. I conclude you have got the five thousand pounds for me."

The miser shook his head, and proceeded to detail the robbery that had taken place in his house. Firebras heard the narration with a smile of incredulity. "This story may do well for some persons, Mr. Scarve," he said, at its close; "but I am too old a hand to be duped by it. You had better confess at once, and frankly, that you have changed your mind and will not advance the money."

"I have already explained the cause of my inability to do so," rejoined the miser, with stern significance; "and it must suffice."

"Well, sir," cried Firebras, "you have grievously disappointed me—and you will disappoint others as grievously. You know that if the good cause prospers, you will have a hundred per cent. for your money—and you profess to wish it well. I *must* have a thousand pounds to-night."

"That I may possibly manage," rejoined Scarve; "but I cannot give it to you in cash. Lady Brabazon has just deposited her jewels with me for that amount."

"Oh! you can lend her ladyship money, though you refuse it to me," returned Firebras reproachfully. "Your admiration of the fair sex is greater than your devotion to the good cause, I perceive. But I must put up with the jewels, since better may not be."

"Here they are," replied Scarve, producing the case. "You must give me a receipt for them."

"Willingly," said Firebras, taking up a pen. "I shall put them down as a thousand pounds in money."

"You must put them down as fifteen hundred," cried the miser hastily. "I am not to run all this risk for nothing."

"Extortioner!" exclaimed Firebras between his teeth. "However, it shall be as you will. King James the Third is your debtor for fifteen hundred pounds. There."

"How very strange!" ejaculated the miser, with well-feigned surprise, as he took the memorandum. "Your writing is exactly like that of a letter I found in my closet just now, and which was evidently dropped by one of the robbers."

"A letter!" exclaimed Firebras uneasily. "Have you got it? Let me look at it." The miser produced the scrap of paper, and placed the memorandum beside it. "The handwriting is rather like

mine, undoubtedly," said Firebras, with the most perfect composure. "But do you mean to say this paper was found in the room where the robbery was committed?"

"It was found there by Jacob," rejoined the miser. "Shall I call him to add his testimony to mine?"

"Oh, by no means!" replied Firebras. "Well, Mr. Scarve, as I may be considered the indirect means of your losing this money, I will take care, if the good cause prospers, that the amount is made up to you."

"You had better confess at once that you caused it to be taken," said the miser.

"You are resolved I shall criminate myself," replied Firebras, laughing—"but I won't do so. I've no doubt, however, your money is in good hands."

"Then I am satisfied," rejoined Scarve. "Now, mark me, Mr. Firebras. In the event you have named, I shall expect that fourteen thousand pounds to produce me twenty thousand. Give me a memorandum to that effect. Nay, you can write it at the back of the letter."

Firebras smiled, and complied, and Mr. Scarve smiled too, as he compared the memorandum with the writing on the other side of the paper. And this was all that passed on the subject.

XVII

Mr. Cripps' Alarming Intelligence—Randulph's Introduction to the Jacobite Club—Sir Norfolk Salusbury and Father Verselyn—The Treasonable Toast—Dangerous Position of Randulph—His Firmness—Punctiliousness of Sir Norfolk Salusbury.

CORDWELL FIREBRAS, on quitting the Little Sanctuary, bent his steps towards Tothill Street. He was laughing to himself, probably, at what had just occurred, when, hearing quick footsteps behind him, he turned, and beheld Mr. Crackenthorpe Cripps. The valet's looks so much alarmed him that he instantly stopped and inquired what was the matter.

"Oh, lud! I'm quite out of breath," gasped Mr. Cripps, putting one hand affectedly to his side, while with the other he held a scented handkerchief to his nose.

"Speak, sirrah! and don't keep me in suspense!" cried Firebras—"what's the matter, I say?"

"Danger—a dungeon—death on the scaffold is the matter," replied Mr. Cripps. "You have betrayed yourself most indiscreetly, Mr. Firebras—you have, 'pon rep!"

"In what way?" demanded the other uneasily.

"Your conversation with Mr. Randulph Crew, in the cloisters yonder, has been overheard," returned Mr. Cripps; "yes, you may well start, sir—I repeat, it was overheard by Peter Pokerich, the barber, and

his sweetheart, Thomasine Deacle, the mercer's fair daughter. The little fellow was planning how to make the most of the discovery, when fortunately I chanced to call upon him, and with great ingenuity —though I say it—contrived to throw dust in his eyes, as he has done into those of so many of his customers. Ha! ha!"

"This is awkward," said Firebras thoughtfully. "Will the barber join us, think you? And, if so, can he be trusted?"

"Hum!" exclaimed Mr. Cripps, throwing himself into a musing posture; "that requires consideration. I think I might manage him. But I must be paid for the service, Mr. Firebras—well paid, sir."

"Unquestionably," returned the other. "Your reward shall always be in proportion to your utility."

"Then there's the fair Thomasine," pursued Mr. Cripps. "She must be silenced, too. Egad, I'll make love to her. But I must be paid for that likewise."

"Surely the lady will be reward enough?" laughed Firebras.

"On the contrary, I shall have her on my hands," replied Mr. Cripps. "But I won't demand more than my due, sir—'pon rep! Allow me to offer you a pinch of snuff. I shall now go back to the barber, and when matters are settled, you may expect me at the Rose and Crown." And raising his hat, and making a profound bow, he strutted off.

Ruminating on the intelligence he had received, Cordwell Firebras proceeded to Petty France, where he struck off on the right into Gardiner's Street, and

entered the Rose and Crown. Nodding familiarly to the landlord, who came from the bar to greet him, he marched on towards a back room, where Randulph was seated.

"I am sorry to have quitted you so long, my dear young friend," he said; "but I have been detained by Mr. Scarve."

"Have you seen Hilda?" asked the young man.

"No," replied Firebras; "but I intimated to her father that I had a good match in view for her; and that I should speak to him on the subject to-morrow."

Further conversation was interrupted by the landlord, who ushered in Sir Bulkeley Price. The Welsh baronet hurried forward, holding out both his hands towards Firebras; but he started, and looked exceedingly surprised on beholding Randulph.

"I need not present my young friend, Mr. Randulph Crew, to you, Sir Bulkeley," said Firebras; "for I believe—nay, indeed, I know—you are already acquainted with him."

"I have passed a great part of the morning with Mr. Crew," said Sir Bulkeley, bowing; "but I was not aware he belonged to our party. I am extremely glad to find it so."

Before Randulph could reply, the door again opened, and a gaunt tall personage entered the room, who was announced by the host as Sir Norfolk Salusbury. Never had Randulph seen so extraordinary a figure as that now presented to his gaze. Sir Norfolk was more than six feet high, with a very meagre, but withal muscular-looking frame, and large prominent features. He held himself so

whispered conversation ensued, in which Randulph took no part. In about a quarter of an hour, the landlord entered the room, and, bowing to the company, said, "I believe, gentlemen, you are all assembled; the room upstairs is ready, if you are disposed to adjourn to it." The proposition being assented to, the landlord threw open the door, and a slight contest occurred between the two baronets as to which should offer the other precedence.

"I præ, Sir Bulkeley," said Sir Norfolk; "I will scale the staircase after you."

Thus exhorted, Sir Bulkeley, who thought it good breeding not to dispute a point of needless ceremony, went on. Sir Norfolk marched after him with majestic steps, and the rest of the party followed. The landlord ushered them into a large room, lighted by a chandelier suspended from the ceiling, in the centre of which was a circular table covered with bottles and glasses. Having hung up their hats against the wall, the company sat down, and a few bumpers went briskly round. While they were thus carousing, a tap was heard at the door, and the landlord, opening a reconnoitring hole within it, spoke to some one without. He next proceeded to convey the information he had received in a low tone to Cordwell Firebras, who immediately said aloud, "Oh, yes, admit him by all means. Gentlemen, a new brother!" The door was then opened, and Randulph recognised in the gaily attired, self-possessed coxcomb who was admitted, Mr. Crackenthorpe Cripps.

"Take a glass of wine, Mr. Cripps," said Firebras,

filling a bumper, and handing it to the new-comer. "It is Beau Villiers' chief valet," he added, in an undertone, to Sir Norfolk, who had made a polite though formal bow to the stranger.

"What!" exclaimed Sir Norfolk, almost shuddering at the inadvertence he had committed; "a waiting-man in such costly and nitid attire. Why, his master, the Pretonius Arbiter of the day, can scarcely be more studiously refined in the taste and style of the vestments wherewith he adorneth his person."

"Not a whit so," laughed Firebras; "the only difference between them is, that Beau Cripps wears in May the coat which Beau Villiers has worn in April."

"Mehercle!" exclaimed Sir Norfolk. "Such prodigality almost exceedeth belief."

"Landlord, it is time!" cried Father Verselyn, who performed the part of chairman, and occupied the principal seat.

"I am ready, your reverence," replied the landlord. And he forthwith proceeded to a cupboard, from which he produced a large china bowl, apparently filled with punch, and placed it with great care and solemnity in the centre of the table.

"Why, it is water," exclaimed Randulph, gazing at the clear lymph, with which, on nearer inspection, he perceived the bowl was filled.

"To be sure!" cried Firebras; "and we are about to drink the king's health—*over the water*. And now, gentlemen," he continued, filling Randulph's glass and his own, "fill, I pray you, to the brim."

"I have filled, even to the summit of the vase,' said Sir Norfolk, rising and holding up his glass.

"And I," cried Sir Bulkeley, likewise rising.

"And I," added the landlord, who stood next to the last-named baronet, and was allowed to join in the ceremony.

"And I—and I," chimed Mr. Travers and the valet.

"Then give the word, my son," said Verselyn, addressing Firebras.

"With the greatest pleasure, father," replied Cordwell. And he held his glass over the bowl, while his example was imitated by all the others except Randulph. "Here is the king's health 'over the water.' Why don't you do as we do!" he added, turning to Randulph.

"Ay, stretch forth your arm over the scyphus, young gentleman," cried Sir Norfolk, pointing to the bowl.

"You *must* drink the toast—it's the rule of the club," added Sir Bulkeley.

"It is a rule I cannot subscribe to," replied Randulph.

"How!—am I mistaken in you, young man?" said Firebras, regarding him menacingly.

"Do as they bid you, or you'll have your throat cut, 'pon rep!" whispered Mr. Cripps, popping his head over Firebras's shoulder.

"Will you drink the toast, or not?" demanded Firebras fiercely.

"I will not!" replied Randulph firmly. "It is treasonable, and I refuse it."

Randulph's bold declaration had well-nigh cost him dear. Cries of "spy!" "traitor!" "Hanoverian!" "down with him!" resounded on all sides; the landlord rushed to the door, and placed his back against it, to prevent any attempt at egress in that way; while Sir Norfolk Salusbury, plucking his long blade from its sheath, and making it whistle over his head, kicked a chair that stood between him and the young man out of the way, and bade him, in a stern tone, defend himself. The confusion was increased by the vociferations of Mr. Cripps, and by an accident caused by Sir Bulkeley Price, who, in hurrying round the table, contrived to entangle himself in the cover, and dragging it off, precipitated the bottles and glasses to the ground, drenching the lower limbs of his brother baronet in the contents of the fractured bowl. The only two persons apparently unmoved in the midst of this uproar were its author and Cordwell Firebras. The latter made no hostile display, and did not even alter his position, but kept his eye steadily fixed upon Randulph, as if anxious to observe the effect of the incident upon him. The young man maintained his firmness throughout. He retreated a few steps towards the wall, and put himself in a posture of defence. The nearest of his antagonists was Sir Norfolk Salusbury; but seeing the others press forward, the chivalrous Welsh baronet declined commencing the attack.

"Singulatim!—one at a time, Mr. Travers," he cried. "Ne Hercules contra duos. It shall never be said that any man, however unworthy of fair

treatment, fought against odds in the presence of a descendant of Adam de Salzburg. Stand aside, therefore, sir—and you, Father Verselyn—and leave him to me, or I must relinquish the right of combat, which I have in some measure acquired, as being the first to claim it, to you."

"Let the young man swear to keep silence touching all he has seen and heard, or he shall not quit this room alive," rejoined Travers.

"Trust him not—trust him not!" cried Father Verselyn; "his oath will not bind him. Fall upon him altogether and slay him! That is the only way to insure his silence and our safety. I will absolve you of his blood. The imminence of the danger justifies the deed."

"Proh pudor!" cried Sir Norfolk sternly. "That would be trucidation dedecorous and ignave; neither can I stand by and see it done."

"Nor I," cried Sir Bulkeley, who had by this time recovered from the embarrassment occasioned by the accident. "I disapprove of Father Verselyn's counsel entirely. Let us hear what the young man has to say. I will question him."

"Haudquàquam, Sir Bulkeley," replied the other gravely; "I gave you precedence on a recent occasion, but I cannot do so on the present. I claim this young man as my own—to interrogate, to fight, and, perchance, to slay him."

"Fight him as much as you please, Sir Norfolk, and slay him if you think proper—or can," rejoined Sir Bulkeley angrily; "but you shall not prevent my speaking to him."

"Sir Bulkeley Price," returned Sir Norfolk, raising his crane neck to its utmost height, "I pray you not to interfere between me and Mr. Crew, otherwise——"

"Well, Sir Norfolk, and what then?" cried the other, his hot Welsh blood mounting to his cheeks, and empurpling them more deeply than usual. "What then, Sir Norfolk?"

"I shall be compelled to make you render me reason for it," replied the other sternly.

Cordwell Firebras now thought it time to interfere. "Gentlemen," he said, advancing towards them, "we have plenty of other quarrels to settle without disputing among ourselves. I brought Mr. Randulph Crew here, and will be responsible for his silence."

"What saith the young man?" demanded Sir Norfolk. "If he will oppignerate his word for taciturnity, I will take it."

"So will I," added Sir Bulkeley.

"I thank you for your good opinion of me, gentlemen," returned Randulph. "I have been, almost unwittingly, a party to your counsels, and ought perhaps to have declared my sentiments sooner; but I hoped the meeting would pass off without rendering any such avowal necessary, in which case, though I certainly should never have joined your club again, the secret of its existence would have rested in my own bosom—as it will now, if I am suffered to depart. I could not avoid expressing my disapproval of a toast, which, in common with every loyal subject of King George the Second, I hold to be treasonable."

"You cannot be the subject of a usurper, young

man," said Firebras. "Your allegiance to King James the Third is unalienable."

"Compel him to avow allegiance to his rightful sovereign, Mr. Firebras," interposed Father Verselyn.

"I will sooner lay down my life than comply," cried Randulph resolutely.

Firebras looked slightly disconcerted; and Sir Norfolk, who had lowered the point of his sword, again raised it.

"It is in vain to reason with him, my son," whispered Verselyn. "Our safety demands his destruction. If he goes hence we are denounced, and an irreparable injury will be done to the good cause."

"I have promised him safe conduct, father," rejoined Firebras; "and, at all risks, I will keep my word. Mr. Randulph Crew, you are at liberty to depart. You give up all hopes of the miser's daughter?" he added, in a deep whisper.

"I must, if she is only to be purchased in this way," replied Randulph, in the same tone.

"Take time to consider of it," rejoined Firebras. "I will find means of communicating with you to-morrow. Landlord, attend Mr. Crew to the door."

"You are wrong in letting him go," cried Verselyn. "You will repent this blind confidence. Sir Norfolk, I entreat you to interfere—Sir Bulkeley, I appeal to you." But they both turned from him, and sheathed their swords; while the landlord, having received a sign from Firebras, obeyed his instructions.

As soon as Randulph was gone, Firebras addressed

himself to the two baronets: "I hope no unkindly feeling—none, at least, that cannot easily be set to rights—subsists between you, gentlemen?" he said.

"I shall never quarrel with my good friend, Sir Norfolk, except about a matter of punctilio," replied Sir Bulkeley, who was as easily appeased as roused to anger.

"And I ought never to quarrel with one who knows how to make so handsome a concession as Sir Bulkeley Price," replied Sir Norfolk, with a gracious bow.

"Then the storm has blown over," laughed Firebras. "I feared this more than the other."

A long discussion then took place among the members of the club as to Randulph's introduction to it, and Firebras was severely censured by Father Verselyn for admitting the young man without testing his political principles.

"I do not repent what I have done, father," returned Firebras, "because I am satisfied no harm will come of it; and it was an attempt to gain a very useful ally to our cause. He is a brave lad, as his firmness during this affair proved, and it would be a great point to win him over. Nor do I yet despair of doing so."

"I hope we have seen the last of him," muttered Father Verselyn; "and I beg it may be borne in mind that it was against my advice that he was suffered to depart."

Cordwell Firebras darted an angry look at the priest, but he made no reply; and the cloth having been replaced by the landlord and Mr. Cripps, the

former proceeded to fetch a fresh supply of flasks and glasses; after which the company once more gathered round the table, and began to discuss anew their projects.

XVIII

The Jacobite Club surprised by the Guard—The Flight and Pursuit—Mr. Cripps' Treachery—His Reflections.

MIDNIGHT arrived, and found the party still in deep debate. Suddenly, a quick and continuous knocking was heard at the door. All instantly started to their feet, gazing at each other in alarm.

"We are betrayed," said Firebras, in a deep whisper.

"We are," replied Father Verselyn; "and by the spy you introduced among us."

"It is false!" cried Firebras angrily. "But this is no time for dispute. We must provide for our safety. Who is it, landlord?" he cried to the host, who, on the first alarm, had rushed to the door and opened the reconnoitring hole within it.

"O lud! we're all lost!" rejoined the landlord, closing the trap-door, and returning to them with scared looks and on tiptoe, as if afraid of the sound of his own footsteps.

"Who is it?—what is it?" demanded Firebras.

"A dozen grenadier guards, headed by their captain and lieutenant, come to search the house," replied the landlord. "They're mounting the stairs now."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Sir Bulkeley, "this is awkward!"

"There is nothing to fear," said Firebras calmly. "We have plenty of time for flight."

"Yes, you can fly, gentlemen; but I am ruined," exclaimed the landlord. "I can never return to my own dwelling!"

"Pshaw! you shall never be the worse for it," replied Firebras.

"But what will become of me, if I am taken?" cried Mr. Cripps, feigning a look of despair. "I am sure to be the worse for it."

"Silence!" cried Firebras authoritatively. "Don't you hear them?—they are at the door. Be quick, gentlemen. Not a moment is to be lost."

While this was passing, Father Verselyn hurried to the lower end of the room, and, mounting a ladder placed against the wall, passed through a trap-door in the ceiling above it. The landlord, Mr. Cripps, and Mr. Travers, next ascended; then Sir Bulkeley followed; then Sir Norfolk, whose equanimity not even the present danger could disturb; while Firebras brought up the rear.

"'Sdeath, Sir Norfolk!" cried the latter, as the baronet slowly scaled the steps before him—"move on a little more quickly, or we shall certainly be captured. They're breaking open the door. Don't you hear them?"

"Perfecté," replied Sir Norfolk coolly. But he did not on that account accelerate his movements.

Knowing it was in vain to remonstrate, Cordwell Firebras waited till Sir Norfolk had worked his long

frame through the trap-door, which he did with the utmost deliberation, and then ran up the steps himself, with much more activity than might have been expected from a person so weighty. Just as he was quitting the ladder, the door was burst open with a tremendous crash, and two officers of the guard rushed into the room, sword in hand, followed by a dozen grenadiers armed with muskets, on which bayonets were fixed. Firebras's first object, on securing a footing on the floor of the garret above, was to try to draw up the ladder, and he was assisted in the endeavour by Sir Norfolk; but their design was frustrated by the foremost officer and a tall grenadier bearing a halberd, both of whom sprang upon the ladder, and kept it down by their joint weight, and all that those above could do was to shut down the trap-door before it could be reached by their foes. A dormer window opened from the garret upon the roof of the house; but an unexpected difficulty had been experienced by the first detachment of fugitives in unfastening it. All ought to have been in readiness for an emergency like the present, and Sir Bulkeley and Mr. Travers bitterly reproached the landlord for his negligence. The poor fellow declared that the mischance was not his fault—that he had taken every possible precaution—and, in fact, had examined the window that very morning, and found it all right.

At length it was forced back, and all but Sir Norfolk and Firebras got through it. They were detained by the necessity that existed of guarding the trap-door. Unfortunately, there was no bolt on

the upper side of it, so that they had to stand upon it to keep it down, and this plan being discovered by the officer below, he ordered two of his men to thrust their bayonets through the boards, while the tall grenadier tried to prize open the door with his halberd. The manœuvre compelled Firebras and Salusbury slightly to alter their position, to avoid being wounded by the bayonets, and in doing so they necessarily gave admittance to the point of the halberd. The efforts of the assailing party were redoubled, and the trap slightly yielded.

"Lose not a moment! fly, Sir Norfolk!" cried Firebras, apprehensive lest the baronet's deliberation, which he well knew nothing could shake, should prevent his escape.

But, true to his principles, Sir Norfolk would not move an inch.

"I cannot leave you in angusto," he said.

"But I am the stronger of the two, as well as the more active," rejoined Firebras. "My weight will suffice to keep down the trap-door till you have got through the window, and then I can make good my retreat. Fly! fly!"

But Sir Norfolk continued immovable. "I shall be the last to quit this place," he said, in a tone of unalterable determination. "But do not, I pray you, tarry with me. The trifurciferous myrmidons of the Hanoverian usurper shall never take me with life."

"I must leave the punctilious old fool to his fate," muttered Firebras, observing that the greater part of the head of the halberd was forced through the

side of the trap. "God protect you, Sir Norfolk," he cried, rushing to the window.

The brave old Welsh baronet essayed to hew off the head of the halberd from the staff—but in vain; and finding that the enemy must gain admittance in another moment, and that Firebras had cleared the window, he turned away and strode majestically towards it. His retreat was so suddenly made, that the grenadier who held the pike, and was prizing with all his force, lost his balance, and tumbled off the ladder, causing such confusion among his comrades, that Sir Norfolk had time to get through the window unmolested.

It was a beautifully bright night—the moon being at the full, and the sky filled with fleecy clouds. On the left lay ridges of pointed-roofed houses, covered with the warm-looking and mellow-tinted tile, so preferable to the cold blue slate—broken with stacks of chimneys of every size and form—dormer windows, gables, overhanging storeys, and other picturesque and fantastic projections; and the view being terminated, at some quarter of a mile's distance, by the tall towers and part of the roof of Westminster Abbey.

Viewed thus, the whole picture looked exquisitely tranquil and beautiful. The fires in the houses were almost all extinguished, and little or no smoke issued from the chimneys to pollute the clear atmosphere. Above the venerable and majestic fane hung the queen of night, flooding its towers—seen at such an hour to the greatest advantage—with silvery light, and throwing some of the nearer buildings and pro-

jections into deep shadow, and so adding to the beauty of the scene. On the right, the view extended over other housetops to the gardens and fields of Pimlico. Behind was Saint James's Park, with its stately avenues of trees, its long canal, and Rosamond's Pond glimmering in the moonlight; while in front lay the New Artillery Ground, and the open and marshy grounds constituting Tothill Fields. But it will be readily imagined that neither Firebras nor his companions looked to the right or to the left. They were only conscious of the danger by which they were menaced, and were further discouraged by Father Verselyn, who at that moment scrambled over the roof they were about to cross, to inform them that the door by which they hoped to escape could not be got open.

"Everything seems to have gone wrong!" cried Verselyn in an ecstasy of terror. "What will become of us?"

"Jacta est alea," replied Sir Norfolk composedly. "We must fight for it, father."

"Heaven and all its saints protect us," cried the priest, crossing himself.

"Be composed, father," rejoined Firebras sternly. "You ought to be equal to any circumstances in which you may be placed. Ha!"

The latter exclamation was occasioned by a joyous shout, announcing that their friends had succeeded in opening the door; and the next moment the good news was confirmed by Sir Bulkeley Price, who clambered over the roof to acquaint them with it. On hearing this the party instantly beat

a retreat; and their flight was accelerated by the officer and the tall grenadier, who at that moment sprung out of the window. Even Sir Norfolk was urged to a little more expedition than usual; and two or three of his mighty strides brought him to the top of the roof. Cordwell Firebras would not have been much behind him, if Father Verselyn had not caught hold of his coat-tails to help himself up the ascent, which he felt wholly unable to accomplish without assistance. By this time the officer was well-nigh upon them; and, finding his summons to surrender wholly disregarded, he made a pass at the priest, which took effect in the fleshy part of his leg, restoring him at once to more than his former agility. Uttering a loud yell, and clapping his hand to the wounded limb to stanch the blood, Father Verselyn bounded over the roof, and made to the door through which the landlord and Mr. Travers had already disappeared, and through which Mr. Cripps was now darting. Between the two roofs lay a small flat space, used by its former proprietor as a place for drying clothes, as was evident from the four tall posts at the corners.

Here Firebras and Sir Norfolk came to a stand, resolved to dispute the passage with their pursuers. Sword in hand, and calling to them to surrender, the foremost officer dashed down the roof; but his precipitation placed him at the mercy of Firebras, for, his foot slipping, the latter struck his sword from his grasp. Sir Norfolk, in the interim, had encountered another foeman with equal success. This was the tall grenadier, who, as he descended,

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made a thrust at the baronet with his halberd, which the latter very adroitly parried, and, lunging in return, disabled his adversary by a wound in the arm. At the same moment, too, the tiles gave way under the weight of the grenadier, and he sank above the knees in the roof. Other foes were now at hand. The second officer, carrying a lantern in one hand, and a drawn sword in the other, appeared on the roof; while the tall caps and bayonets of the rest of the grenadiers were seen above it. Though Sir Norfolk, whose blood was up, would have willingly awaited the advance of these new opponents, he yielded to the entreaties of Firebras, and followed him through the door, which was instantly secured behind them by a couple of strong bolts.

The house in which the Jacobites had taken refuge was expressly hired by them for an occasion like the present, and kept wholly uninhabited. The mode of communication between it and the Rose and Crown will, it is hoped, be sufficiently understood from the foregoing description. That so many unforeseen accidents should have occurred at a time when, if ever, things ought to have been in readiness, almost drove the poor landlord distracted; but if he could have watched Mr. Cripps' manœuvres, he would have speedily found out the cause of the delays. In the first instance, a penknife, dexterously slipped by the valet into the groove of the window, prevented it from moving, and had well-nigh, as has been seen, occasioned the capture of the fugitives. This difficulty having

been overcome by the strenuous efforts of Sir Bulkeley and Mr. Travers, Mr. Cripps was the first to scramble through the window.

"Which way?" he cried to the landlord, who was following.

"Over the roof, and to the door opposite," was the reply.

Nimbly as a cat the agile valet bounded over the roof, and instantly perceiving the door, made towards it. A key was in the lock; he turned it, took it out, and dropped it into the street below. He then began to shake the door violently, and shouted to the landlord, who at that moment came in sight.

"Unlock it—unlock it!" cried the host.

"I can't," cried Mr. Cripps; "there is no key. 'Pon rep! we shall be all taken."

"No key!" exclaimed the landlord. "Impossible! I saw it there this morning myself. It must have dropped down. Look about for it."

Mr. Cripps feigned compliance, and the landlord, coming up, poured forth a torrent of imprecations on finding his statement correct. Father Verselyn, as has been related, crept back to Firebras, while the others used their efforts to open the door. Nor were they long in effecting their purpose. Finding all other attempts fail, the landlord stepped back on the leads, and running to give additional impetus to the blow, dashed his foot against the door, and the lock yielded with a loud crash.

Baffled in his schemes, the plotting valet would fain have practised some new trick upon them;

but the presence of Cordwell Firebras, whose suspicions he was fearful of arousing, restrained him. Indeed, he had little opportunity for further display of his art. Ordering the others to go downstairs, Firebras only tarried to lock an inner door, and then followed them.

The house, as already stated, was perfectly empty, and opened at the back into a court, which branched off into several of those intricate alleys with which Petty France abounds. Two minutes had not elapsed before the fugitives found shelter in this court, and were rapidly threading it, and though they were noticed by some of the neighbours, who had been alarmed by the shouts of the soldiery, and took them for a gang of housebreakers, they effected their retreat without further molestation. The officer and his followers succeeded in breaking into the garret; but before they could burst open the inner door, the party had quitted the house.

Guided by the landlord, the priest and Mr. Travers scudded through a labyrinth of passages leading in the direction of the New Chapel, which building they skirted on the left, and crossing Stretton's Ground, found a secure asylum at a small public-house in Duck Lane, where the landlord was known, and where the unfortunate priest, who had become very faint from the loss of blood, was enabled to get his wound dressed.

Sir Bulkeley Price, Sir Norfolk, and Firebras took the opposite direction; and after traversing several narrow passages reached James Street, where, finding they were not pursued, they slackened their

pace, and entering the Park at the gate near the lower end of Rosamond's Pond, proceeded to Firebras' lodgings. A slight tap against the window speedily procured them admittance. The shutters were then closed, and Firebras threw himself into a chair, and for some minutes maintained a profound silence, which neither of his companions seemed disposed to break. "Well, gentlemen," he said, at length, "our meetings at the Rose and Crown are over. We must find some other place of rendezvous. This is a most unlucky chance."

"There never was a plot nor conjuration but experienced some contrarious accident, Mr. Firebras," replied Sir Norfolk calmly. "I am in no wise astonied at it."

"In my opinion treachery has been practised upon us," remarked Sir Bulkeley; "and I suspect the landlord is the author of it."

"My suspicions attach to Mr. Villiers' gaudily ornate serving-man," remarked Sir Norfolk. "I own I misdoubted him ab incepto."

Firebras said nothing; but rose, and opening a cupboard, took out a bottle of rosa solis and glasses, and set them before his guests. Sir Bulkeley quickly tossed off a couple of glasses; but Sir Norfolk, who was a pattern of sobriety, as he was a model of punctilio, declined to drink. They then fell into debate, and it was broad daylight before they separated, Sir Bulkeley taking his way across the Park to his residence in St. James's Square, and Sir Norfolk proceeding to his lodgings in Abingdon Street.

It now only remains to inquire after Mr. Cripps. He followed the landlord and his party for a short distance, and then coming to a halt, held a brief communion with himself.

"I have failed this time," he thought; "but it is all owing to the bad management of that brainless little barber. However, I'll take care he has the full blame of it with the Jacobites; and the next time I attempt their capture, I'll make sure work of it. It will be no use lodging information against any of them, for no proof can now be obtained of their presence at the meeting. No, no; I must keep upon terms with them, and abide my time. They must all be taken in the fact; and then my reward will be proportionate. I wonder whether Pokerich is in safety. I saw the little rascal among the guard on the house-top, and he looked almost as much frightened as Father Verselyn. By-the-bye, something may be made of that priest. He's a double dealer, I'll be sworn. 'Pon rep! I like these nocturnal adventures vastly. They remind me of the romances I have read, and make me fancy myself a hero. A hero! Egad, the heroes of romance don't generally betray their friends. But that only shows the authors of such works don't draw from real life. But I must go home and get a little rest, or I shan't be in trim for Marylebone Gardens and my dear Mrs. Nettleship to-morrow."

XIX

Mr. Jukes' Notions of Domestic Happiness—Trussell a Little the Worse for Wine—Randulph receives a Note from Firebras — Jacob Post brings Information to Abel.

SHORTLY after Hilda's departure, Abel Beechcroft summoned his butler, and informed him he was going out. "I shall be back in time for dinner," he said. "If Miss Scarve should call again during my absence, which is not impossible, though I think it unlikely, show her into the library, and take care that Randulph does not see her."

"I was in hopes, sir, that your interview with that dear young lady might have altered your views in regard to your nephew," replied Mr. Jukes. "I've been pleasing myself ever since she went away with the idea of the nice wife she'd make Mr. Randulph. They seem cut out for each other—just of an age—and it's difficult to say which is the handsomest. Bless my heart! if the marriage *should* take place, what a feast we should have, and how busy I should be! And then, of course, you'd have the young folks to live with you; and you'd get so fond of your new niece, that you wouldn't bear her out of sight for an instant, but would be happier than you've been before. And then, in due time, you'd have to turn one of the upper rooms into a nursery, and I should see you sitting in your easy-chair, not with a book before you,

blinding your eyes, but with young Master Crew on a rocking-horse on one side, and young Miss Crew on t'other, while the nurse would be bringing you a third crowing little bantling in long petticoats, encouraging the growth of its teeth, and cultivating a taste for music at the same time with a silver rattle."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Abel, who had allowed the butler to ramble on in his own way. "Your notions and mine of domestic happiness differ materially. I've always treated you with great confidence, Jukes," he added gravely; "and I confess I should be glad to see Randulph well and happily married. But I'm in no hurry about it. It is desirable that he should see something of the world—something more of female society, in order that he may understand his own tastes better before he takes a step on which the whole happiness or misery of his future life will hang. It's a sad thing for a man to discover, when too late, that he hasn't chosen well."

"It must be rather disagreeable, no doubt," rejoined Mr. Jukes; "but I don't consider an old bachelor like you a competent judge in the matter. However, if Mr. Randulph chooses Miss Hilda he'll choose well—that I'm prepared to maintain."

"Jukes," said Abel sternly, "it is time to check your loquacity. Much as I am pleased with Hilda Scarve—and, I assure you, she has won upon my affections in an extraordinary manner—I do not desire, for reasons which it is needless to explain, that she should become the bride of my nephew."

"Those reasons of yours lie so deep, sir, that I can't fathom them," replied Mr. Jukes; "unless —but I should have thought you too old."

"To old for what, Jukes?" said Abel.

"At all events, I should have thought *her* too young," pursued the butler. "But stranger things *have* happened."

"What the deuce do you mean to insinuate, sirrah?" cried Abel.

"Why, I fancy you want to marry Miss Hilda yourself, sir," replied the butler. "And I'm sure I've no objection—none on earth—if you can get the lady's consent. Only I think there's a little too much disparity, that's all."

Abel flushed to his very temples, and then became pale as death. He made no reply, however, but walked quickly towards the window, returning the next moment with his wonted composure. "I scarcely know whether to laugh at you, or reprove you for your strange supposition, Jukes," he said. "In any other case than this, I certainly should have been angry; but here," he continued, in a slightly tremulous tone, "my feelings are too deeply interested. No, Jukes, I shall never marry—least of all, the daughter of——" here his utterance failed him.

"I understand, sir," resumed Jukes hastily. "Don't say another word. I see my mistake."

"Then repair it," rejoined Abel, recovering himself. "Mind, I will have no excuse for neglecting my instructions." With this, he proceeded to the hall, and taking up his hat and stick, reiterated his injunctions to the butler, and went forth.

Mr. Jukes returned to his pantry, ruminating on what had occurred, and muttering to himself, "I almost wish our quiet house hadn't been disturbed by these young folks. I perceive plainly that Randulph will fall over head and ears in love with Hilda—if he hasn't done so already—and then my master'll quarrel with him, and then—but no, he's sure to pardon him, just as I always overlook the faults of my graceless nephew, Crackenthorpe. However, it won't do for me to bring 'em together; and I hope the young lady mayn't come back." His apprehensions were groundless. At the very time he was thinking of her, Hilda was passing the Folly on the Thames.

At a little before four o'clock Abel Beechcroft returned, and seemed much relieved to find that nothing had occurred during his absence. He sat down to dinner by himself at the appointed time, discussed the meal in silence, and even when the wine was placed before him, evinced so little disposition to talk, that Mr. Jukes took the hint, and left him alone. He continued in the same mood during the whole evening; reading as long as the light permitted, and then repairing to the garden, where he remained till summoned to supper. In reply to his inquiries whether his brother and nephew had come back, he was told that the former had returned about an hour ago, alone.

"Alone!" echoed Abel, shrugging his shoulders, and glancing triumphantly at Mr. Jukes. "I told you how it would be. Randulph's career of dissipation has begun with a vengeance. Where will

it end, eh?—where will it end, Jukes? Tell me that."

"I wish I could," responded the latter, with something like a groan.

Abel found his brother in the supper-room, and at once perceived, from his uncertain movements and flushed looks, that he had taken too much wine.

"So you have not brought your charge home with you," he observed drily. "Where is he?"

"'Pon my soul, that's more than I can tell!" laughed Trussell. "He dined with Sir Singleton Spinke and myself at a French ordinary in Suffolk Street, and left us to keep an appointment—he! he!—soon after five o'clock. I expected to find him here on my return; but I suppose he has been detained. You must make allowances for young men, sir. It is his first indiscretion—ha! ha!"

"I hope it will be his last," replied Abel, seating himself. And as the supper proceeded, he elicited from Trussell, whose condition rendered him exceedingly communicative, a full account of all that occurred during the morning, including even the glimpse they had obtained of Hilda, at the time of her passing the Folly.

"And did she see Randulph?" asked Abel quickly.

"To be sure," replied Trussell, laughing; "she couldn't help it. The boat was close to us. And, egad! I must say, if I am any judge of such matters—which I flatter myself I am—she looked desperately annoyed at seeing him with the pretty

actress—he! he! Your health, brother!" he added, raising a bumper of claret, poured out by the butler, to his lips.

"I'm not sorry for the encounter," muttered Abel. "A glass of white wine, Jukes. Brother, I drink to you. And how did Randulph behave on the occasion?"

"It embarrassed him devilishly," rejoined Trussell; "and, in fact, he didn't recover himself during the whole day."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Abel thoughtfully. "And is he gone to visit the pretty actress, Kitty Conway, to-night—eh?"

"I'faith, I can't say," replied Trussell, laughing. "I left him to his own devices. But we shall have him back presently, and then you can catechise him yourself—ha! ha!" Trussell continued talking, laughing, and quaffing, during the whole of supper. He was in far too jovial a mood to notice—or heed, if he did notice them—the grave looks of his brother at his boasts of the introductions he should give his nephew—the sights he should show him—and the perfect gentleman he would make him. Abel's brow grew dark as the clock struck eleven, and Randulph had not returned. He made no remark, however, but rising, called for a light, and, wishing his brother good-night, he retired to rest.

"I'm afraid Mr. Randulph has displeased his uncle, Mr. Trussell," said Mr. Jukes. "I wish he had come home before the old gentleman went to bed."

"I wish he had, Mr. Jukes," replied Trussell, laughing; "but it can't be helped. Boys will be boys. I needn't tell you I was just such another at his age."

"You were a great deal worse than he'll ever be, I hope," replied the butler, shaking his head.

"Ha! ha! I fear so, Jukes," replied Trussell, smiling, as if a high compliment had been paid him. "I was a sad fellow—a sad fellow! I've been talking over old times and old adventures with Sir Singleton Spinke; and I fear we were terrible rakes—he! he! The young men of the present day have sadly degenerated. They haven't half the spirit of the beaux of Queen Anne's days, when I was young—that is, when I was a boy, for I am young still. The bottle's empty, Jukes. But perhaps you think I've had wine enough. And, i'faith, I almost think so myself. So I'll e'en seek my pillow.

"The man that is drunk is void of all care,
He needs neither Parthian quiver nor spear;
The Moor's poisoned dart he scorneth to wield,
The bottle alone is his weapon and shield.
Tol de rol.

"This world is a tavern with liquor well stored,
And into't I came to be drunk as a lord;
My life is the reck'ning, which freely I'll pay,
And when I'm dead drunk, then I'll stagger away!
Tol de rol.

Sit up for Randulph, Jukes. I'll lecture him in the morning. Carry the candle, old fellow, and

lend me your arm, for I don't feel quite so steady as usual.

"If I live to be old, for I find I go down,
Let this be my fate in a country town;
May I have a warm house, with a stone at the gate,
And a cleanly young damsel to rub my bald pate.
Derry down!"

And, singing and laughing in a maudlin manner, he was conveyed upstairs to bed.

Abel's first inquiry, when Mr. Jukes entered his room on the following morning at seven o'clock, was as to the time at which his nephew returned overnight, and he received for answer, "Oh, somewhere about half-past eleven or twelve, sir; I didn't exactly observe."

"You took care not to do so," rejoined Abel. "But what account did he give of himself?"

"I really didn't question him, sir," returned Mr. Jukes. "He went to bed almost immediately. But, if he retired late, he's up early enough; for he's in the garden already."

"The deuce he is!" cried Abel, getting up. "Well, come, that's something in his favour, at all events. My dressing-gown, Jukes."

"If I might offer an opinion, sir," said the butler, as he assisted his master to put on his morning-robe, "I should say Mr. Randulph hasn't been at a gay party. He looks very thoughtful, and as if he had something on his mind. I hope he isn't going to fight a duel."

"I hope not!" cried Abel hastily. "That may

account for his getting up so early. I must see him, and prevent it. Don't let him go out, on any account, till I come down." Having dressed himself as expeditiously as he could, he proceeded to the garden, where he found his nephew looking quite as pensive as he had been described by the butler. "You were late home, last night, Randulph?" he said, after the usual greeting had passed between them.

"I was, indeed, much later than I intended, uncle," replied the young man; "but I was unavoidably detained."

"May I ask in what way?" rejoined Abel.

"Pardon me, uncle, if I do not answer the question," replied Randulph.

"I will not press you," rejoined Abel severely. "But upon one point I require a direct answer. You have not, I trust, an affair of honour, so called —but most mistakenly—on hand?"

"I have not," replied Randulph emphatically.

"I believe you," rejoined Abel. "And so I am told you saw Hilda Scarve yesterday, and under circumstances not very agreeable to yourself?" The young man blushed deeply. "I am not sorry to find you have some shame left," said his uncle; "and trust the occurrence may prove a wholesome lesson to you. And now, while I am lecturing you, let me add that there are other dangers to which you may be exposed, besides those arising from pretty actresses and dissipation. I mean political dangers—dangers springing from the secret societies and their agents. Your father, I am aware, inclined

to the Jacobite cause; and I am aware, also, that your mother had, and still has, the same bias. But she gave me to understand you were a stanch Hanoverian. Has she misrepresented you?"

"Most assuredly not!" replied Randulph. "But I have troubled myself so little about the matter, that it is only lately that I have discovered her opinions were adverse to my own. I am obliged to you for the caution you have given me. Do you chance to know a gentleman named Cordwell Firebras?"

"The name seems familiar to me," replied Abel, musing. "Ah, now I recollect it. It belonged to a person who was concerned in the Rebellion of '15, and had well-nigh involved your father in it. But what of him?" he continued, regarding Randulph fixedly. "Do you know him? Have you met him since you came to town?"

"I must again decline answering the question, uncle," replied Randulph.

"Your declining to do so *is* an answer in this case," rejoined Abel; "and I must warn you against him as a most dangerous person. Thirty years have elapsed since this Firebras placed your poor father in fearful jeopardy. But if he is the person I have heard described, they will not have changed him."

"Set your mind at rest as to his influence over me," replied Randulph. "I shall never waver in my loyalty."

"I am glad to hear it, nephew," returned Abel; "for rely upon it, if, unhappily, another rebellion

should break out, it will end as disastrously as the first. And now let us go to breakfast." And, leading the way to the house, they sat down to the well-spread board. Trussell did not make his appearance, and the meal passed off satisfactorily enough, until, towards its close, Mr. Jukes brought a note, which he delivered to Randulph.

"By your leave, uncle," said Randulph, glancing in some confusion at the superscription, and recognising the hand.

He then broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"I am going to Mr. Scarve; and if I have an assurance of regret from you for your hasty conduct last night, and an undertaking that you will join us, I will engage to procure you the hand of his daughter. Your determination must be speedily made; for to-day he is about to sign a marriage contract with his nephew, Philip Frewin. The bearer will bring you to me, if you desire to see me. C. F."

"You seem agitated, nephew," observed Abel. "Are the contents of that note secret?"

"Indeed, sir, they are," replied Randulph. "And, what is more, I must answer them in person."

"Oh, by all means do so," replied Abel testily. "But remember my caution."

Randulph then hurried out of the room, and found, in the hall, the landlord of the Rose and Crown, who had brought him the note. "Are you going with me, sir?" asked the landlord.

Randulph replied in the affirmative; and they quitted the house together. Abel was a good deal surprised and annoyed at his nephew's departure, and repaired to his library, where he endeavoured to compose his thoughts with a book. But the remedy in this instance proved futile; for when Mr. Jukes entered the room about an hour afterwards, he found him pacing to and fro within it, with a disturbed air.

"Well, is Randulph returned?" he asked quickly.

"No, sir," replied the butler. "I am come to say that Mr. Scarve's servant, Jacob Post, is without, and wishes to speak with you."

"What's his business?" demanded Abel sharply.

"I didn't inquire, sir," replied Mr. Jukes; "but something, I should fancy, relating to Miss Hilda."

"Most likely," said Abel. "Show him in." And the next moment Jacob was admitted. He had his crabstick under his arm, and twisted his hat between his fingers as before, looking in any way but direct at Abel. Seeing his presence was desired by neither party, Mr. Jukes retired. "Well, friend, what has brought you hither?" asked Abel.

Jacob coughed, and tried to clear away the huskiness that impeded his articulation. "I've come to see whether you've a situation for me, sir," he said, after sundry ineffectual attempts at plain speaking. "Wages isn't an object with me, sir—they isn't, indeed. And I should like to serve you better than any other gen'l'man I know of."

"What! have you left Mr. Scarve?" said Abel.

"Not yet, sir," replied Jacob. "But he's given

me notice. And, if he hadn't, I think I should have done the same by him. He's grown worse than ever. He promised to give me a recommendation to you; but I don't think he meant what he said."

"Well, I'll see what can be done for you," rejoined Abel, "that is, if Mr. Jukes can find you a place—for I must leave the matter entirely to him. But what about your young mistress?"

"I was comin' to her, sir," replied Jacob; "but I thought I'd settle my own affairs first. I've no good news to tell you about her. Master locked her in her own room last night, and he declares he won't let her out till she consents to marry his ne'vy." Abel uttered an angry exclamation. "Within these few days he's grown a downright barbareous domestic tyrant!" continued Jacob. "There's no bearing him. But, to be sure, he had enough to put him out of his way yesterday; for you must know, sir, he was robbed of fourteen thousand pounds during our absence. However, he took it more quietly than one might expect; and I can't help thinkin' as how one Mr. Cordwell Firebras, a strange gentleman who visited him yesterday mornin', knew somethin' about it."

"Cordwell Firebras! Has he been with him?" asked Abel, in surprise.

"He was with him twice yesterday," replied Jacob. "And a note came from him this morning, which I know, from some words let fall by the old fellow concernin' it, related to your ne'vy and his daughter."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Abel.

"I almost fancy Mr. Firebras advised him to make up a marriage between 'em," pursued Jacob.

"'Sdeath!" exclaimed Abel furiously. "How dares he make such a proposition? Who commissioned him to interfere?"

"That's more than I can tell," replied Jacob. "But, howsomedever, I don't think master'll pay much attention to him, for he is going to sign a marriage contract with Mr. Philip Frewin and his attorney this mornin'."

"It must not be," rejoined Abel. "That Frewin is an impostor."

"So I thought, from the first," returned Jacob; "but yesterday it was confirmed to me." And he proceeded to detail what he had witnessed at the Folly on the Thames.

Abel heard him in silence, and, at the close of his narration, said, "Much as I dislike your master—painful as the interview will be to me, I will see him myself. Do not announce my coming, but take care I obtain admittance. Get some refreshment as quickly as you can, and then make the best of your way home."

Jacob was not slow in obeying the injunction. Repairing to the kitchen, in less than five minutes he laid bare a cold shoulder of lamb, despatched half-a-dozen lettuces, which he plunged into a salt-stand and then thrust almost whole into his capacious mouth, disposed of rather better than half-a-loaf, and washed all down with a large jug of strong ale. He then set off to the stairs by the river-side, where his boat awaited him, and jumping into it, pulled off as swiftly as he could to the opposite bank.

rupted Diggs. "You have a fair ground of action for defamation. As a professional man, I warn you to take heed what you say of my respectable client, Mr. Beechcroft."

"You and 'your respectable client' will pursue whatever course you think proper," replied Abel; "but do not imagine your menaces will prevent me from disclosing the truth to Mr. Scarve."

"If you come to defame my nephew to me, Mr. Beechcroft, your errand will be fruitless," said the miser, who had by this time fully recovered his composure. "I must decline hearing anything you have to say. After what passed between us, years ago, I am surprised you should come here at all; and I am still more surprised that you have obtained admittance, which you certainly would not have done if my inclinations had been consulted. But it seems I am no longer master of my own house, or of my own servant."

"Mr. Scarve," said Abel, in a commanding tone, and with a look that made the miser quail, "I have been called upon—solemnly called upon—to take this step. You well know the opinion I entertain of you, and the abhorrence in which I hold you, and that nothing would have brought me near you but a matter of the utmost urgency. I have been called upon, I repeat, by an appeal which I could not resist"—his voice slightly trembled—"to befriend your daughter, and at the sacrifice of all personal consideration, I *will* befriend her. She herself has told me she has the strongest dislike to your nephew, and never will marry him."

"All this may be very true, sir," replied the miser; "but I am at a loss to understand the right you have to mix yourself up in my affairs."

"He has no right whatever, legal or otherwise, to do so," interposed Diggs.

"I shall assume the right, then," replied Abel. "Mr. Scarve, if you are deaf to the appeal I have made to you, if you can resist the dying wish of your much-injured wife, for hers is the charge laid upon me, and are determined to force the inclinations of your child—if neither of these instances have weight with you, at least exercise the prudence which has hitherto been supposed to guide your conduct. You know me too well to suppose for an instant that I would deceive you. I therefore, in your presence, and in his presence, denounce your nephew as an impostor—a cheat—a swindler!"

"'Sdeath! sir, if you go on thus," cried Philip fiercely, "neither your years nor my uncle's presence shall protect you."

"Let him pursue his own course," said Diggs, taking up a pen, and making some hasty memoranda on a sheet of paper. "We shall have swingeing damages—swingeing damages."

"Mr. Beechcroft," said the miser, "the opinion you have expressed of me is fully reciprocated. You cannot hate me more than I hate you. Nevertheless, I am free to admit that you are incapable of advancing a deliberate falsehood; and I therefore believe that you think what you tell me of my nephew. But you are completely deceived; and some one, for a base purpose, has practised upon

your credulity. Mr. Philip Frewin is a careful and a prudent man—far too careful to please you—and has in a few years saved a large sum of money. This, his attorney and mine, Mr. Diggs, will, I am persuaded, testify to you."

"Unless bonds, mortgages, and leases, to the tune of twenty thousand pounds and upwards go for nothing, I certainly can do so," replied Diggs. "Mr. Philip Frewin is worth that sum, besides fifty thousand pounds left him by his father, and which I have every reason to believe he holds in his possession. I agree with you, Mr. Scarve, Mr. Beechcroft must be the dupe of some designing person. But I can soon convince him of his error."

"You will perhaps convince my attorney, Mr. Plaskett, of Lincoln's Inn, whom I have instructed to make inquiries on the subject, sir," returned Abel incredulously. "Meantime, I am satisfied that I have sufficient warrant for my opinion, and I therefore adhere to it. I also give you warning, Mr. Diggs, that I shall hold you accountable for your statement. You say that Mr. Philip Frewin is wealthy—that you have deeds of his in your possession proving him worth twenty thousand pounds and upwards. Let those deeds be exhibited to Mr. Scarve."

"There is some reason in this, Diggs," remarked the miser. "I should like to see them."

"If my client permits it, and you desire it, I can have no objection," replied Diggs readily, yet with a certain uneasiness; "but I am grieved to think such a degrading course should be necessary to

support a character which ought to be above all suspicion."

"Circumstances seem to render it necessary," said the miser. "And it must be as satisfactory to my nephew, as it will be agreeable to myself, that his character should be cleared from these aspersions."

"Undoubtedly," replied Philip; "and I will not rest till I have so cleared it."

"And to reduce the charges to a distinct form," said Abel sternly, "I declare you, Philip Frewin, to be a ruined spendthrift and debauchée, seeking, under the disguise of a wretched miser, to delude your uncle into giving you his daughter. I charge you also, Mr. Diggs, with assisting him in the cheat. As a professional man, you well know what the consequences of your fraudulent conduct will be."

"Aware that I have nothing to fear, I deride your threat," said Diggs boldly.

"And so do I," added Philip, with a quavering laugh.

"May I hope, then, that you will suspend all further negotiations respecting your daughter's marriage till you are further satisfied on these points, Mr. Scarve?" said Abel.

"I will," replied the miser.

"Mr. Beechcroft may appear very disinterested in this matter," said Philip; "but, in my opinion, the main object of his interference is to obtain my cousin's hand for his own nephew, Mr. Randulph Crew."

"So far from that being the case," said Abel, "I would as soon consent to her union with yourself as with him."

"Hum!" exclaimed the attorney.

"Don't alarm yourself on that score, nephew," said the miser. "Make good your own case, and Hilda is yours. But come what may, depend upon it, she shall never be the wife of Randulph Crew, with my consent, or with a farthing of mine."

"Or of mine," subjoined Abel. As these words were uttered, the side-door opened, and Hilda entered, followed by Mrs. Clinton.

"Ah!" exclaimed the miser, darting an angry look at her. "What do you want here?—who let you out of your room?"

"Jacob unlocked the door, and informed me that Mr. Beechcroft was below," she replied; "and I therefore came down to see him."

"I trust I have opened your father's eyes to the trick attempted to be practised upon him," said Abel. "He has promised not to proceed in the matter till a satisfactory explanation is given him respecting your cousin's affairs. And as I know that can never be done, the match is virtually at an end."

"If it were not so," replied Hilda, "it would make no difference with me; for I here declare before you, that even if my cousin should prove to be what he represents himself, I will never wed him."

"After such a declaration, young man, is it possible you can desire to prosecute the match?"

"Is my cousin in earnest?" asked Philip, eagerly catching at the opportunity of escaping from the dilemma in which he found himself placed.

"You could scarcely doubt it," she replied. "But if you require a reiterated assurance, take it."

"Then, sir, if Hilda retains these opinions," said Philip to his uncle, "there is an end of the affair."

"How so?" cried the miser. "You have my concurrence. Hilda will not dare to disobey me—to brave my displeasure."

"I will not take her on those terms," replied Philip. "I will have her by her own free consent, or not at all."

"Ah! you are more scrupulous than you were yesterday," observed the miser suspiciously. "You shrink from your bargain. There is some truth in what Mr. Beechcroft has stated."

"Take care, sir," observed Mr. Diggs to Philip. "Your motives will be misconstrued."

"I care not," replied Philip. "I should be worse than Mr. Beechcroft represents me, to pursue a match when the lady expresses so decided an opinion against it. I therefore beg to resign all pretensions to her hand."

"Nephew!" exclaimed the miser, in surprise.

"I am grateful for the good opinion you have entertained of me, uncle," pursued Philip; "and though I thus deprive myself of all chance of becoming your son-in-law, I will [illegible] fully satisfied of my title to [illegible] shall wait upon you with [illegible]

"You are hasty, Philip——"

"Not so, uncle. I wish [illegible]" And he was about to depart, [illegible] again opened by Jacob, admitting [illegible]

and Randulph. It would be difficult to say whether the new-comers, or those to whom they were introduced, were the most surprised at the meeting. Amid the confusion, however, Randulph contrived to approach Hilda.

"I fear," he said—"indeed, I know I must have lowered myself in your opinion by my conduct yesterday. But, though it may be no exculpation, permit me to state that the situation in which you perceived me was the result of accident."

"No apologies are necessary to me, sir!" said Hilda, haughtily and distantly. "It cannot be other than matter of indifference to me who are your associates."

"Yet hear my explanation," pursued the young man. "The lady you saw me with was committed to my care by—as I live—by the very person who stands there, except that he was differently dressed at the time."

"I never saw you before, sir," said Philip—"never!"

"I am satisfied you are the person," cried Randulph—"I would swear to your voice."

"After this, sir, can you longer question the cheat attempted to be played upon you?" said Abel, to the miser.

"If he does doubt it," said Firebras, "I will open his eyes."

"It is plain I am tricked by some of you, and trifled with by all!" cried the miser angrily. "I would my house were rid of you!"

"You shall be rid of me, at all events, uncle,"

said Philip, eager to escape. "Again I wish you good-morning. Come, sir," he added, to the attorney. And they left the house together.

"I am glad he is gone," said Firebras. "Mr. Scarve, I have the pleasure to tell you your nephew is a consummate rascal, and it is well you are rid of him. Mr. Abel Beechcroft, I did not expect to meet you here, but your presence is singularly opportune."

"For what, sir?" demanded Abel coldly.

"Why, to come to some arrangement respecting a matter in which the happiness of your nephew is materially concerned," replied Firebras. "I hope, sir, if these young people," pointing to Randulph and Hilda, "can understand each other, you will throw no obstacle in the way. And you, friend Scarve," he added, turning to the miser, "I counsel you to place this young man in the position of your nephew. He will make her a far better husband, and ——" he whispered a few words in the miser's ear.

"The condition, I presume, which you annex to the union is, that my nephew should join the Jacobite cause, Mr. Firebras?" demanded Abel. Firebras made no reply. "Is it not so, Randulph?" pursued Abel sternly.

"Uncle," replied Randulph, rushing towards him, and flinging himself on his knee before him, "I love Hilda passionately, and would sacrifice my life for her!"

"But not, I hope, your honour," replied Abel coldly. "Recollect to whom you owe allegiance. Maintain your loyalty unsullied, or I discard you."

"Be not too hasty, sir," cried Randulph; "more than my life hangs on your breath!"

"Randulph Crew," said the miser, "I have suffered things to proceed thus far without interruption, because I have been taken by surprise; but no importunities of yours, your uncle's, or Mr. Firebras', shall prevail upon me to consent to your union with my daughter; and I positively interdict you from seeing her again."

"And I lay the same injunction upon him," said Abel.

"Hilda!" exclaimed the young man, looking at her—"Hilda!" But she averted her gaze.

"Come with me, Randulph!" cried Abel authoritatively, and moving towards the door. And, heaving a deep sigh, Randulph followed his uncle out of the room.

"Hilda," said Cordwell Firebras, as soon as they were left alone—"you have lost a true lover—you, Mr. Scarve, have lost a good son-in-law—and I and the Jacobite cause have lost an excellent partisan."

END OF THE FIRST BOOK

BOOK THE SECOND

TRUSSELL BEECHCROFT

I

Trussell's Appearance after his Debauch — He proceeds with Randulph to Lady Brabazon's— The Party go to Marylebone Gardens.

NEITHER Randulph nor his uncle felt disposed for conversation during their walk to Lambeth, whither they proceeded on quitting the miser's habitation; and, in fact, Abel thought it desirable to let the events that had just occurred work their own effect on his nephew's mind, without any assistance from him. Half-an-hour saw them home, and Mr. Jukes looked from one to the other as if anxious to learn what had happened; but he received no information. They found Trussell in the breakfast-room, reclining in an easy-chair, sipping a cup of cold green tea to tranquillise his nerves, and reading the fashionable movements and intelligence in a morning paper, by the aid of a pair of spectacles, which he hastily took off on hearing their approach. He had on a loose brocade dressing-gown, a crimson silk nightcap, slippers down at heel, and ungartered

hose hanging loosely about his legs. Altogether he had a very rakish and dissolute appearance. His eyes were red and inflamed, and his face flushed with the previous night's debauch. An open note lay beside him on the table sealed with a coronet. He looked up with an air of fashionable languor as his brother and nephew entered the room, and asked yawningly where they had been; but receiving no answer, jumped up, and repeated the inquiry with real interest.

"Don't ask, brother," replied Abel significantly—"let it suffice that all is now right."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Trussell, "though I don't know what has been wrong. I've just received a note from Lady Brabazon, Randulph, inviting us to accompany her to Marylebone Gardens this afternoon. You know we are engaged to dine with Sir Bulkeley Price."

"Go to Marylebone, by all means," said uncle Abel kindly—"it will serve to distract your thoughts."

"I ventured to answer for you, Randulph," pursued Trussell, "because there is a fête there to-day, and you are sure to be much amused. You'll find Marylebone very different from the Folly—ha! ha!"

"Only folly under a different name and in a richer garb—that's all," laughed Abel.

"I'll now go and dress," said Trussell. "Lady Brab has sent us a subscription ticket," he added, pointing to a silver medal, about the size of a modern ivory Opera ticket, or "bone," stamped with designs

in bold bas-relief, numbered, and inscribed "MARYBONE—ADMIT TWO," with the date, 1744.

Abel took up the ticket, glanced at it, and laid it down with a smile. Randulph made an excuse for retiring to his own room, and, on reaching it, threw himself into a chair to indulge his reflections. And bitter and crushing they were. Till within the last hour, when he fully believed he had lost her for ever, he had not known the extent of his passion for Hilda. Now he felt—as all who have loved deeply have felt on some such occasion—that his existence had become a blank to him, and that he should never be entirely happy again. Again and again he reproached himself for his folly in respect of Kitty Conway; and he almost resolved, like Uncle Abel, to forswear a sex that occasioned him so much torment. A tap at the door aroused him from his meditations, and Mr. Jukes entering, informed him that his uncle Trussell was ready, and waiting for him. Randulph said he would be down in a moment; and making some slight change in his attire, which he scarcely thought suitable to the gay scene he was about to join, descended, and found his uncle in the hall, fully equipped in a snuff-coloured velvet coat, laced ruffles, diamond buckles, a well-powdered bag-wig, and a silver-hilted sword. Trussell appeared rather impatient, and declared they were behind time; and he proceeded at a rapid pace to the stairs near Lambeth Palace, where he called a boat, directing the waterman to row as quickly as he could to Whitehall Stairs—the nearest point to Pall Mall, where Lady Brabazon resided.

As soon as they were gone, Abel summoned Mr. Jukes, and after having partaken of a biscuit and a glass of wine, ordered the butler to prepare to attend him to Marylebone Gardens. Mr. Jukes, who was well enough pleased by the proposed expedition, made as little delay as was consistent with his dignity; and having delivered full instructions to the under-servant respecting dinner, presented himself in a well-powdered bob-major wig, a well-brushed brown coat, white waistcoat, and black velvets; and what with his round, rosy face, his swag paunch, and shapeless legs, looked the model of a well-considered, well-fed, and most respectable servant. Attended by the butler, Abel proceeded to Lambeth Stairs, where, as luck would have it, the ferry-boat chanced to be crossing at that moment. Accordingly they got into it, and in a few minutes were transported, together with a crowd of passengers of both sexes, and no less than six horses, in safety to the opposite side of the river. At the corner of Abingdon Street they found a coach, which Abel instantly engaged, and got into it, while Mr. Jukes with some difficulty clambered up to the box. They then drove along the Horseferry Road; passed at the back of Buckingham House, and proceeded along Hyde Park Lane to their destination.

Meanwhile, Trussell and Randulph, having arrived at Lady Brabazon's, were ushered into a magnificently furnished drawing-room, where they found Beau Villiers, Sir Singleton Spinke, Clementina, and her ladyship; by the latter of whom they were very graciously received. Lady Brabazon in-

stantly perceived Randulph's dejection, and, exerting all her powers of wit and raillery, soon raised his spirits. Whenever Lady Brabazon, indeed—mature coquette as she was—was determined to please, she seldom failed in accomplishing her purpose; and she directed her artillery with such tact and skill on the present occasion, that Randulph, armed as he conceived himself against such attacks, was not quite proof against her. It was quite evident, whether her feelings were interested or not in the conquest, that she was determined to captivate the young man. This was so apparent, that a slight feeling of jealousy was roused in the breast of the beau, and he somewhat abruptly intimated his intention of giving up a drive to Richmond, which he had meditated, and of accompanying them, instead, to Marylebone Gardens. This change of plan was not altogether to her ladyship's taste; but she affected to be delighted with it.

"By-the-bye, Mr. Crew," she said to Randulph, "you must attend my Drum to-morrow night. I have asked the new beauty whom Villiers has discovered—I mean Miss Scarve, the miser's daughter. She's perfectly charming, Villiers says—but I forget; I needn't describe her, for you have seen her. As I live, I have called a blush to your cheeks! Ha! ha! don't you envy him his power of blushing, Villiers? Mr. Trussell Beechcroft, I suspect your nephew is in love with Miss Scarve. See how he crimsons at the mention of her name."

"Your ladyship forgets that my nephew is but newly imported from the country," replied Trussell.

"He is not accustomed to the raillery of persons o your ladyship's wit."

"There's something more than bashfulness in hi confusion," replied Lady Brabazon. "Mr. Crew i smitten by Miss Scarve—let him deny it if he can. And so for that matter is Villiers."

"I'faith am I," replied the beau; "and if her father will give her fifty thousand pounds, which I know he can do, I will make her a present of my name and person."

"You don't think it necessary to ask the young lady's consent?" said Randulph, scarcely able to conceal his displeasure.

"Assuredly not," replied the beau, with a self-sufficient smile, which Randulph thought perfectly intolerable—"I fancy I'm pretty certain of that."

"You see you've no chance, Mr. Crew," laughed Lady Brabazon—"your only resource is to get some other fair dame or damsel to take compassion on you!"

"Your ladyship, for example," said the beau, in a sarcastic and significant whisper. "But the young man doesn't seem disposed to profit by the suggestion."

Randulph's thoughts, indeed, were elsewhere at the moment.

"Well, I suspect Miss Scarve won't turn out half so beautiful as Mr. Villiers represents her," said Clementina, who couldn't bear to hear any other beauty spoken of except her own. "I've generally been disappointed in the objects of his admiration, and make no doubt she will be like the rest of them —very commonplace and very vulgar."

"She is neither one nor the other," said Randulph, with some vivacity.

"Didn't I tell you he was in love with her!" cried Lady Brabazon, screaming with laughter, and displaying her brilliant teeth. "She has refused him, and that accounts for his dejection."

Randulph's cheeks literally burnt with shame.

"Egad! Lady Brab, I believe you have hit the right nail on the head this time," whispered Sir Singleton Spinke.

"Your ladyship is a little too hard on my nephew," interposed Trussell. "Spare him, I entreat of you."

"Indeed, I shan't," replied Lady Brabazon; "he must learn to take such matters with indifference."

"Well, I hope we shall have an opportunity of seeing this fair creature," said Sir Singleton; "but I fear her father won't let her come. I'm told he watches her like a green dragon."

"I've asked him to bring her," said Lady Brabazon, "and I know he won't refuse me. Shall I confess to you, Mr. Crew," she added, laying her small white hand on his arm, "I've an admirer in this miser, whose heart is supposed to be fixed on his gold. Is not that a triumph?"

"A glorious one!" laughed Trussell. "But I don't wonder at any conquest on the part of your ladyship. Saint Anthony himself would not have been proof against you."

"If Mr. Scarve *should* propose, I advise your ladyship to accept him," said the beau.

"In that case, it won't do for you to make an

offer to his daughter, Villiers," rejoined Lady Brabazon; "for I shall require him to settle all his property on me."

"Then I must get beforehand with you," said the beau, "for I'm resolved to have her."

At this moment, a footman entered, and informed Lady Brabazon that her carriage was at the door. He was followed by the little black page, leading the lap-dog by a silken cord.

"I shall not want you to-day, Mustapha," said her ladyship, taking the cord from him. "I will give Sappho an airing myself." She then arose, and taking Randulph's arm, and quitting the room with him, proceeded through a line of powdered and richly habited lacqueys, to her carriage. Clementina was escorted by Sir Singleton, and, the two ladies being seated, Randulph was requested to take a place beside them. Mr. Villiers accommodated the two other gentlemen in his gilt chariot — the admiration of the day—and the carriages were ordered to drive to Marylebone Gardens.

II

Mrs. Nettleship—Mr. Cripps personates his Master —Marylebone Gardens—Mr. Cripps detected.

Before repairing to Marylebone Gardens, it will be needful to inquire into the proceedings of another person who proposed to visit it—namely, Mr. Cripps. Mr. Villiers, it will be remembered, had intended to

drive over to Richmond on the day in question—to fulfil an engagement of more than a week's standing —but had suddenly, from jealousy or whim, changed his mind. Calculating, however, upon his master's adherence to his original plan, the valet had determined to profit by his absence to visit Marylebone Gardens.

Mr. Cripps, it has been shown, was a very great person in his own estimation; but he sometimes represented himself as a far greater person than he had any title to be considered, and, indulging himself in his master's clothes, laid claim also to his master's title—in other words, sinking the vulgar name of Cripps, he assumed the aristocratic one of Villiers. His displays of this kind were chiefly confined to the eastern side of the metropolis, where he was pretty certain not to meet either his master or his master's friends; his principal places of resort being White Conduit House, Sadler's Wells, Hockey-in-the-Hole, Islington, Hogsden, and certain other places of entertainment on the Surrey side of the water. One Sunday, when he was so disporting himself at White Conduit House, he contrived to strike up an acquaintance with a very showy dame who happened to be there, and who was dazzled by his brilliant exterior and airy manners—so superior, she thought, to those of the vulgar throng around her. Having attended her during her stay, Mr. Cripps called a coach for her, led her to it, and was rewarded by a tender look and a tenderer squeeze of the hand at parting. He had previously ascertained that the lady's name was Nettleship, that she was

the relict of a tallow-chandler, and resided in Billiter Square; that she possessed a handsome property, bequeathed to her by her deceased spouse, the tallow-chandler aforesaid; and moreover, that she was without incumbrances. Fortune thus appeared to have thrown a rich prize in his way, if he could but obtain it. He found, however, on further inquiry, that Mrs. Nettleship was under a marriage engagement to her late husband's partner, Mr. Rathbone, who was at that time in the country collecting debts, and settling his affairs. But though this circumstance certainly appeared untoward, he determined to persevere, being firmly persuaded that in love matters to dare was generally to succeed. With this view, he contrived to meet Mrs. Nettleship as often as he could, and had been exactly half-a-dozen times in her company prior to the opening of this history, during which period he contrived to heighten the agreeable impression he had produced on their first acquaintance, and in a great degree to obliterate the image of Mr. Rathbone.

Mrs. Nettleship was a lady rather below the middle size, but not altogether destitute of personal attractions. She had a very full and very comely figure, very white and very rounded little arms, with pink dimpling elbows; and though she had no neck, or at least none that was perceptible, from the wreaths of fat above and below it, she had cheeks large and round enough to make up for the deficiency. Her eyes were as small as those of a Chinese lady, but very black and bright—bright enough, her late husband used to say, "to light a candle at"; and

her nose had the prettiest turned-up point in the world. It was this feature, in especial, that called forth the descriptive powers of Mr. Cripps, who appeared in a state of ecstasy whenever he contemplated it or thought of it, and having a slightly turned-up nose himself, contended, reasonably enough, that no beauty could exist without such a formation, and that Grecian noses, and above all, Roman noses, were detestable and unendurable. It was not difficult to bring Mrs. Nettleship to his opinion; and though she flustered and blushed at his compliments and fine speeches, and professed to think them too extravagant, it was evident she swallowed them as easily as if they had been strawberries and cream. Mrs. Nettleship was at an age when, more than any other, such compliments are estimated; she was exactly forty-five, and she therefore knew the full value of her attractions. During their interviews, she had often expressed a strong desire to visit Ranelagh, Marylebone Gardens, or Vauxhall, in company with her admirer; but Mr. Cripps constantly evaded the request, under some plea or other, until an opportunity appeared to present itself, in his master's proposed drive to Richmond, and he resolved to hazard a visit to Marylebone Gardens with her, fervently praying it might decide his hopes. So soon, therefore, as the coast was clear, he repaired to his master's dressing-room, and with the assistance of Antoine, the French valet, ransacked the wardrobe, and attired himself in the richest habiliments it contained. Thus the embroidered scarlet coat, the flowered silk waistcoat,

the black velvet breeches, the pearl-coloured silk hose, that had decorated the beau's own person on the previous day, were now transferred to his own. To these he added one of his master's finest laced shirts, and a point-lace cravat. A pair of large diamond buckles were fixed to his shoes, and a silver-hilted sword to his side. He next selected a large and brilliant ring from the beau's jewel-box, which he placed upon his finger; covered his cheeks and chin with patches; put on a full flowing Ramillies periwig, thrust a magnificent gold snuff-box into his pocket, together with a fine cambric handkerchief; chose the handsomest clouded cane he could find; took up a feathered hat which had only been once before worn by his master, and which he himself had prevented him from wearing on that day; and having contemplated himself with great complacency in the large cheval-glass before him, declared to Antoine that he thought he should do! Receiving a confirmatory reply from the French valet, he went down a back staircase, which he had often traversed before when bent on secret expeditions, and quitted the house. A coach was waiting for him at the corner of Spring Gardens, into which he got, and ordered the coachman to drive for very life to the top of Harley Street, where he had appointed to meet Mrs. Nettleship, and where, in fact, he found her waiting for him. Discharging his own vehicle, he handed the lady out of hers; and apologising to her for having detained her, led the way to the gardens. He launched out into an eloquent panegyric on her dress, which he designated

as ravishing, predicting its effect on the assemblage they were about to join. Mrs. Nettleship had, indeed, taken quite as much pains with her toilette as her admirer; and it was no slight satisfaction to her to find her efforts appreciated. Her gown was of blue and silver silk of the richest description, and inflated almost to the size of a balloon by an enormous hoop. She wore diamond earrings, and a diamond solitaire, while her neck was encircled by a chain of large orient pearls. Her stomacher was spotted with plated silver, and thickly studded with Bristol stones. Her sleeves were short and wide, tied above the elbow with white satin bows, and edged with deep falls of lace. Her cap was of pink silk, and caul-shaped, and from behind it floated two steamer-like crimson ribands. Her ruddy complexion, which needed no aid of rouge, was relieved by abundance of patches, while her little fat fingers, rosy as those of Aurora, pept from out a pair of black mittens. A large fan, then as indispensable to a lady as a sword to a gentleman, completed her appointments.

Marylebone Gardens, it is well known, lay on the eastern side of the upper end of the lane bearing the same name—the whole of the country beyond Harley Street, which was not more than a third of its present extent, being open fields. They were of considerable size, and were originally laid out and planted at the beginning of the last century, at which time the public were gratuitously admitted to them. In one part of the grounds there was an excellent bowling-green, which drew many lovers of

that most agreeable recreation to it. By degrees the gardens, being very conveniently situated, rose in repute; and in 1737, their proprietor, Mr. Gough, began to demand a shilling for admittance—this sum entitling the visitor to its value in refreshments. But still further improvements were effected. Orchestras, boxes, and a theatre for musical entertainments, were erected within them. Besides the main walks, semicircular rows of trees were planted, and hedges contrived so as to form pleasing labyrinths for those who preferred privacy. Bowers and alcoves were built in different places; lamps were fastened to the trees, and at night, on the occasion of a fête, every part of the garden was illuminated with myriads of lamps of various colours. The company began to improve, and the price of admission was raised to five shillings. Fêtes of every kind were held here; and the place continued in vogue until nearly the end of the century with which its rise commenced. Malcolm mentions that a few trees, once forming part of Marylebone Gardens, were standing at the north end of Harley Street, in 1808. But we fear not even a stump of one of them is now left. Carriages, coaches, and chairs were setting down their occupants at the entrance to the gardens, as Mr. Cripps and his companion drew near. Never had Mrs. Nettleship seen a gayer throng—the dresses she thought magnificent. There was Lady Ancaster, whom Mr. Cripps pointed out to her, in a brocaded lutestring sack, with ruby-coloured ground and white tobine stripes trimmed with floss—the Countess of Pomfret, in a black satin sack flowered with red

and white—Lady Almeria Vane, in a scarlet unwatered tabby sack—Lady Ilchester, in a white tissue flowered sack. All these ladies wore hoops; but none of them, Mr. Cripps assured his companion, managed this equipment with half so much grace as herself.

Throughout this stage of the business, Mr. Cripps had some difficulty in playing his part, and it required all his effrontery to enable him to go through with it. Having affirmed to his companion that he was an intimate acquaintance of all the ladies of rank he encountered, and in the habit of attending their routs and parties, he was under the necessity of sustaining the character, and kept constantly bowing and kissing his hand to them. In most cases he succeeded; for the ladies he addressed, deceived by his showy attire, which seemed to mark him as somebody, returned his salutations. Mrs. Nettleship was enchanted. To be attended by so fashionable a person, who knew all the *beau monde*, was supreme felicity. She would have given the world to be introduced to some of the fashionable ladies, and intimated as much to her companion; but he was too shrewd to attend to the suggestion, contenting himself with saying, with a very impassioned look, "I hope, my angel, that one of these days, I shall have the honour of introducing you to my fair friends under another name. 'Twould make me the happiest of men—'pon rep!"

"Odd's bodikins! Mr. Willars, how you do confuse me!" exclaimed the lady, spreading her large fan before her face.

By this time they had gained the principal avenue leading towards the orchestra, and at each step he took, Mr. Cripps kissed his hand to some elegantly dressed person.

"There's my friend, Lord Effingham, and his countess," he said. "Glad to see you, my lord. That's the pretty Mrs. Rackham—a bride, sweetheart, a *bride*," with tender emphasis. "That's the rich Mrs. Draper—I daren't look at her, for she's determined to have me, whether I will or no; and I can't make up my mind to it, though she's promised to settle sixty thousand pounds upon me, and to die in six months."

"La! Mr. Willars, you wouldn't sell yourself to such an ojus creature as that!" cried Mrs. Nettleship —"why, she's a perfect fright, and *so* dressed!"

"Precisely what you describe her, 'pon rep!" replied Mr. Cripps. "But do listen to the music. Isn't it inspiring?" And they paused for a moment to listen to the lively strains proceeding from the orchestra, which was placed at one end of a large building facing the principal walk. By this time the company had almost entirely assembled. The main walk was completely thronged, and presented the appearance of the Mall at high tide; while all the boxes and alcoves were filled with persons discussing bowls of punch, plates of ham, chickens, salads, and other good things. The band in the orchestra was excellent, and the lively airs and symphonies added to the excitement and spirit of the scene. Mr. Cripps created a great sensation. Many persons thought they had seen him before,

but no one could tell who he was. Meanwhile, the object of this attention continued to dispense his bows and smiles, flourished his clouded cane, tapped his magnificent snuff-box, and after astonishing all the beholders with his coxcombry, glided off with his companion into one of the side walks. He had scarcely disappeared, when Lady Brabazon and her party entered the main walk. Her ladyship led her little spaniel by its string, and was attended on one side by the beau, and on the other by Trussell. Behind them walked Clementina, who had contrived to allure Randulph from her mother, and to attach him to her, while on the young man's left walked Sir Singleton Spinke. Everybody whom Mr. Villiers encountered told him of the prodigious beau who had just been seen on the walk—Lord Effingham, Major Burrowes, Lord Dyneover, Sir John Fagg—all described him.

"Who the devil is he!" cried Villiers.

"Haven't the least idea," replied Sir John Fagg. "But I'll speak to him, if I meet him again. He's your very double, Villiers. I'll swear he has employed Desmartins to make him a suit precisely like your own."

"Has he?" cried the beau indignantly. "Then I'll never employ the rascally Frenchman again! and what is more, I won't pay him his bill." The same thing was told him by twenty other persons, and the beau looked anxiously round for his personator, but was for some time unable to discern him.

Meanwhile, Mr. Cripps had sought this secluded walk to give him an opportunity of making a de-

claration to the widow, and, though he was no positively accepted, he was not decidedly refused—the lady only asking time to consider over the proposal. The audacious valet was on his knees and rapturously kissing her hand, vowing he would never rise till he received a favourable answer to his suit, when two persons were seen approaching whom, to his infinite mortification and surprise, he recognised as Abel Beechcroft and his uncle, Mr. Jukes.

"We are interrupted, my charmer!" he cried, getting up, with a countenance of angry dismay. "Let us return to the public promenade. You won't refuse me? I shall kill myself, 'pon rep, if you do."

"I'll think of it, Mr. Willars," said Mrs. Nettleship, twirling her fan. "But it would be a dreadful thing if I was to break my engagement to Mr Rathbone!"

"Oh! curse Mr. Rathbone! I'll cut his throat!" cried Mr. Cripps, glancing anxiously down the walk. But unfortunately there was no outlet at the lower end, and he was compelled to turn and face the intruders. He looked also to the right and left, but on neither side was there an alcove into which he could retreat. Nothing was left for it but impudence, and, luckily for him, this quality seldom deserted him at a pinch. Putting on his boldest manner, he strutted gaily, and with affected nonchalance, towards Abel and his uncle, who, as he advanced, stepped a little aside to look at him.

"Why, as I live!" cried Abel, "that's Mr. Villiers's valet—your nephew, Jukes."

"Lord save us! so it is," cried Mr. Jukes, lifting up his hands in astonishment. "Why, Crackenthorpe, what are you doing here—and in your master's clothes?"

"Truce to your jests, old fellow," said Mr. Cripps, waving him off, "and let me pass."

"What! disown your uncle!" cried Mr. Jukes angrily, "and in the presence of his worthy master! The rascal would deny his own father. Pay me the ten crowns you borrowed yesterday."

"La! Mr. Willars, what's the meaning of all this?" asked Mrs. Nettleship.

"'Pon my soul, my angel, I don't know, unless the old hunks has been drinking," replied Mr. Cripps. "The 'rack punch has evidently got into his head, and made him mistake one person for another."

"'Rack punch!" cried Mr. Jukes furiously. "I haven't tasted a drop! You call him Mr. Willars, ma'am," he added to Mrs. Nettleship. "He's deceiving you, ma'am. He's not Mr. Willars—he's Mr. Willars's gentleman—his valet."

"A truce to this folly, you superannuated old dolt!" cried Mr. Cripps, raising his cane, "or I'll chastise you."

"Chastise me!" exclaimed the butler angrily. "Touch me, if you dare, rascal; Crackenthorpe, Crackenthorpe—you'll certainly be hanged."

"Let him alone, Jukes," interposed Abel. "He'll meet his master at the corner of the walk, and I should like to see how he'll carry it off."

Taking advantage of the interference, Mr. Cripps

passed on with his inamorata, who was as anxiou to escape from the scene as himself; while Abel an Mr. Jukes followed them at a short distance. I fell out as Abel had foreseen. As Mr. Cripps issue into the broad walk, right before him, and not man yards off, were his master and Lady Brabazon together with the rest of the party. If the vale ever had need of assurance, it was now. Bu though ready to sink into the earth, he was true t himself, and exhibited no outward signs of discom posure. On the contrary, he drew forth his snuf box, took a pinch in his airiest manner, and sai to Mrs. Nettleship, "There's Lady Brabazon – accounted one of the finest women of the day; but upon my soul, she's not to be compared with you. With this he made a profound salutation to Lad Brabazon, who looked petrified with astonishment and kissed his hand to Trussell, who was ready t die with laughing. As to the beau, he grasped hi cane in a manner that plainly betokened his inter tion of laying it across his valet's shoulders. Bu the latter, divining his intention, and seeing tha nothing but a bold manœuvre could now save him strutted up to him, and said in a loud voice, "Ah my dear fellow—how d'ye do?—glad to see you– plenty of company"—adding, in a lower tone—"fo Heaven's sake, sir, don't mar my fortune. I'm about to be married to that lady, sir—large fortune sir—to-day will decide it—'pon rep!"

Mr. Villiers regarded him in astonishment, mixe with some little admiration; and at length hi good-nature got the better of his anger. "Wel

get you gone instantly," he said; "if I find you in the gardens in ten minutes from this time, you shall have the caning you merit."

"Good-day, sir," replied Mr. Cripps—"I'll not forget the favour." And, with a profound bow, he moved away with the widow.

"And so you have let him off?" cried Lady Brabazon, in amazement.

"Upon my soul, I couldn't help it," replied the beau. "I've a fellow-feeling for the rascal—and, egad, all things considered, he has played his part so uncommonly well, that I hope he may be successful."

III

A Man of the World's Advice on a Matter of the Heart—The Visit to the Haymarket Theatre, and the Supper afterwards with Kitty Conway —Randulph again awkwardly circumstanced with Hilda.

On the morning succeeding the visit to Marylebone Gardens commemorated in the preceding chapter, as Trussell and Randulph sat together after breakfast, the latter communicated to his uncle all that had occurred at the miser's the day before, and besought him to give him a hope of obtaining Hilda's hand.

"I wish I could do so, Randulph," replied Trussell, who had questioned him particularly as to the lady's deportment and manner during the interview; "but I don't see how it is possible. Were it an

ordinary case, I should say—Go on, make th attempt. Difficulties, especially in love matters, a always to be overcome by perseverance. But it i not so here. In the first place, you have forfeite the lady's esteem, and though that might be set t rights, if you had an opportunity for full explanatio yet, as affairs now stand, it is awkward. Then— what is far more important—her father and m brother are averse to the match; and though i wouldn't signify displeasing one of them, it won' do to offend both." Randulph sighed deeply. "I from an over-nice sense of honour, which, though applaud, I can scarcely understand," pursued Trussell "you had not given your property to your father' creditors, you might have had Hilda for asking."

"Were the choice still left me, I would act as have done," replied Randulph emphatically. " was bound to clear my father's memory."

"Nay, I am far from meaning to upbraid you," replied Trussell. "I think your conduct singularl honourable and disinterested, and not the less s because it has been attended with the present result But in regard to this union, upon which you seen to have set your heart, and about which you hav consulted me, I cannot seriously recommend you t indulge the thought of it for a moment. The tw old gentlemen, who have the reins in their hands set their faces against it so entirely, that, even if th lady's consent could be obtained, it would be th height of folly to proceed with it. You would onl wed to beggary; and, for Hilda's sake, as well a your own, that must never be."

"You are right!" cried Randulph, rising, and taking a turn round the room. "Is there no way of acquiring wealth expeditiously."

"None that I am aware of," replied Trussell; "unless you choose to have recourse to the gaming-table, or the highway. You may, if you please, turn Jacobite, and obtain a commission from King James the Third. Such things, I hear, are now daily given away; and if he *should* come to the throne, your fortune will be made." Randulph started; for this chance remark brought to his mind Cordwell Firebras's proposal, with which his uncle was wholly unacquainted. A means of obtaining Hilda's hand through the influence of this person presented itself to him. But he rejected the idea as soon as conceived. "Jesting apart, nephew," said Trussell, who had noticed his confusion, but attributed it to a different cause, "you must give up all idea of Hilda. She is a charming girl, no doubt; but she is not the only charming girl in the world; and you must fall in love with some one else as quickly as you can. It seems impossible at present, I make no doubt. But don't despair. You'll get over your disappointment in time. Why not begin with Lady Brabazon? She has given you plenty of encouragement, and is just the woman to initiate you into the ways of the world. It would be quite worth your while to devote yourself to her for a season; and by this means you will gain a reputation for gallantry, which is very desirable for a young man."

"I have no such ambition, uncle," replied Randulph.

"Lady Brabazon is extremely fascinating, but m heart is otherwise engaged."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Trussell, "we don't live i the days of chivalry and eternal constancy. Me are no longer the preux chevaliers they used to b Women like us all the better for a little infidelity They fancy us better worth having, when others ar running after us. One success leads to anothe Nourish, if you please, a secret passion for Hilda but amuse yourself as you think proper, in th meantime. If it answers no other purpose, it wi prevent you from doing something desperate. By the-bye, it just occurs to me that we are to mee your lady-love at the drum to-night. Now let m advise you how to act."

Before the counsel could be given, Mr. Juke entered the room, and delivering him a little pe fumed billet, on a silver waiter, departed.

"From Lady Brab herself, I declare!" crie Trussell, glancing at the superscription, and breakin open the note. "Egad! here's a disappointmen Old Scarve won't allow his daughter to atten her ladyship's drum to-night if we go there; an so, she prays us to dine with her to-morro instead."

"And thus I shall miss my only chance of seein Hilda, while she will be exposed to the assiduitie of that daring impertinent Beau Villiers!" crie Randulph.

"Very true!" said Trussell gravely.

"I won't receive the back-word," said Randulp "I'll go in spite of her ladyship."

"Poh poh! you mustn't [illegible]
rejoined Trissell. [illegible]
impropriety and [illegible]
to insult. [illegible]
helmet. [illegible]
the evil forget [illegible]
that if [illegible]
your mistress. [illegible]
Ha ha [illegible]
so entirely banged [illegible]
and see [illegible]
dine at [illegible]
meet with [illegible]
Divert the [illegible]

Whatever [illegible]
bility [illegible]
quiescent [illegible]
they sallied [illegible]
Scaur, [illegible]
lantern. [illegible]
in the old [illegible]
guide to [illegible]
in examining [illegible]
over in [illegible]
its armouries [illegible]
were then, [illegible]
the youth.

From the [illegible]
Exchange, [illegible]
As the lay [illegible]
an appointment [illegible]
several, they were [illegible]

excellent wine. Randulph assented, and to Kiva they repaired.

Trussell's assertion was found to be well wa ranted; the dinner was capital, and the claret good that, in spite of his nephew's remonstrance he called for a second bottle. Randulph ha already drunk more than he was accustomed t but he could not resist the bumpers pressed upo him by his jovial uncle, who assured him that th best way of getting rid of care was to drown it i the glass. A third bottle was called for and di posed of; and Trussell then ordered a coach, an privately instructed the driver to take them to th little theatre in the Haymarket.

On arriving there, they were shown, by Trussell desire, into a box near the stage, and as the entered it, the house was ringing with the applaus bestowed on a song which had just been execute by a female singer. The reiterated cries of enco were at length complied with by the fair object them, who, advancing from the wings whither sh had retired, disclosed the figure and features Kitty Conway. She repeated the song with infini archness and spirit, and Randulph, like the rest the house, was in raptures with her. He applaude vehemently, and as Kitty gracefully curtseyed i return for the plaudits, she recognised him, an during the rest of the performance scarcely eve removed her eye from him.

In spite of his efforts to avoid it, Randulph coul not be insensible to the witchery of her glance neither was he blind to the perfect symmetry

her excellent little figure, displayed to the greatest advantage in a pretty peasant dress, or her airy movements, nor deaf to her joyous laugh, that rung like silver upon his ears. He was, therefore, almost glad when the curtain fell, and hid her from his view.

Trussell, who had noted with secret satisfaction the effect produced by the pretty actress upon his nephew, and who had, perhaps not undesignedly, placed him so near her, now launched into a rapturous panegyric of her charms and talent, declaring both to be unapproachable; and while Randulph was assenting to all he heard, an orange woman entered the box, as was then the custom, and while affecting to offer her basket of fruit to the elder gentleman, slipped a note into the hands of the younger. She then withdrew, and Randulph, opening the billet, found, as he anticipated, that it came from Kitty Conway, and contained an invitation to him to sup with her after the play.

"You will go, of course," said Trussell, as his nephew showed him the note. Randulph looked perplexed. "What! afraid of a pretty woman!" laughed Trussell. "I had a better opinion of you. I'll take care of you. Let me see where she lives Oh, close by—at the corner of the Haymarket, next to Cockspur Street. By-the-bye, the note is not directed. She doesn't know your name. Ha! ha!"

"Well, I suppose I must go," said Randulph.

"To be sure you must," laughed Trussell. "You'll forfeit all claim to be considered a youth of spirit if you don't."

The entertainments of the evening were concluded

by the "Mock Doctor," in which Kitty Conway d not appear; and this over, they quitted the hous and repaired to the abode of the pretty actress. footman in rich livery admitted them, and usher them into a small but exquisitely furnished apar ment, blazing with wax lights and mirrors, whe they found Kitty seated on a couch, conversin with an old gentleman, who, as he looked up their entrance, proved to be Sir Singleton Spink An elderly female, probably the fair actress's mothe was likewise present. The old beau seemed a litt disconcerted on their appearance, but he instantl recovered himself.

As to Kitty Conway, she sprang from the couc and running towards Randulph, stretched out bot hands to him with unfeigned joy, crying—

"Oh! how very glad I am to see you! ho kind in you to come! I had almost given you u And now you must introduce yourself to me in d form; though I wrote to you, you may have pe ceived I didn't know how to address my billet."

"Permit me to have that honour, sweet Kitty said Sir Singleton, stepping forward, "for both a particular friends of mine. I was not aware th were coming, or I would have taken care to appri you of their names. This is Mr. Randulph Cre newly arrived from Cheshire, and with all the fres ness—in every sense—of the country about hi And this is his uncle, Mr. Trussell Beechcroft."

"And his guardian also, I presume," laugh Kitty, "for it appears he won't let him stir wit out him."

"I ought to apologise for this intrusion, Mrs. Conway," said Trussell; "and I can only excuse myself on the ground of my excessive desire to make your acquaintance."

"You are Mr. Crew's uncle, sir, that is enough for me," replied Kitty. "I am delighted to see you."

Trussell bowed, and placed his hand upon his heart—a gesture peculiar to people who have very little heart to be so indicated.

"You have got the start of us, Sir Singleton," he said. "When we had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Conway, at the Folly on the Thames, the other day, I fancied you were unknown to her."

"Our acquaintance is only of two days' date," said Kitty. "Sir Singleton was good enough to send me——"

"Hush! hush! sweet Kitty, I implore you," interrupted the old beau.

"Nay, I haven't been enjoined to secrecy," she rejoined. "He sent me a suite of diamonds worth five hundred pounds, entreating a moment's interview in return, which, of course, I could not refuse."

"Of course not," laughed Trussell. "Do you hear that, Randulph?" he whispered to his nephew. "Ah, you're a lucky dog! No diamonds necessary in your case, you see."

At this moment the servant entered the room and announced supper. Kitty gave her arm to Randulph, and the old beau and Trussell contended for the elderly lady, who at length fell to the charge of the former. Meanwhile the pretty actress led

her most favoured guest to the adjoining chambe
the walls of which were adorned with several choi
paintings, most of them relating to theatric
subjects. Over the fireplace hung a portrait
Kitty herself in one of her favourite characters, an
Randulph commented upon its resemblance to h
with a warmth that brought the colour to h
cheek, and caused her heart to palpitate against h
arm. A round table stood in the middle of th
room loaded with cold chickens, cold ham, col
tongue, lobsters, patés, jellies, and salads. The
were several sorts of wine on the table; ratafi
rosa solis, and usquebaugh on the sideboard; an
champagne in ice on the buffet. As soon as th
others made their appearance, Kitty dismissed th
attendant.

"We can wait upon ourselves just as well," sh
said; "and the presence of a servant is always
restraint."

"I am quite of your opinion," said Trussel
"Allow me to offer you a wing of a chicken."

"Thankye," replied Kitty. "Pray take care
yourself. Have you ever seen me play Flora i
the opera before, Mr. Crew?"

"I'm almost ashamed to confess that this is th
first time I've ever been in a theatre in London
replied Randulph.

"I told you he was fresh from the countr
Kitty," laughed the old beau—"very fresh!"

"I like him all the better for it," she replie
"How singular I should be the first actress yo
have seen."

"Singularly delightful!" rejoined Randulph gallantly.

And Trussell, who sat next him, nudged him in token of his entire approbation. "By-the-bye, Sir Singleton," he said, "I haven't yet inquired how we chance to see you here to-night. I thought you were engaged to Lady Brab's drum?"

"So I was," replied the old beau. "In fact, I've been there for a couple of hours; but I prefer a supper with Kitty Conway to all the parties in the universe."

"You flatter me," rejoined the fair object of the compliment; "such a pretty speech deserves a glass of champagne. Will you join me and Mr. Crew in one?"

"With the greatest pleasure," replied Sir Singleton. And springing up with an agility perfectly youthful, he took a bottle from the ice-pail, and poured its foaming contents into Kitty's glass.

"A thousand thanks, Sir Singleton," she said. "I'm concerned to give you so much trouble."

"Don't say a word," replied the old beau, bowing. "I'm enchanted to be your slave."

"I see no reason why we shouldn't follow their example, madam," said Trussell, taking the bottle from Randulph, and assisting the elderly lady.

"Nor I," she replied, returning his bow.

"Apropos of Lady Brab's drum, Mr. Crew," said Sir Singleton, "old Scarve the miser and his daughter Hilda were there."

"I understood they were expected," said the young man, setting down his glass.

"I hope the wine is not too much iced for you?" remarked Kitty anxiously.

"Not in the least," he replied.

"It sometimes gives one a pain in the heart," said Kitty—"and I feared that such might be the case with you."

"She seemed to be greatly admired," resumed Sir Singleton; "but, for my part, I agree with Clementina Brabazon in thinking her beauty overrated. One thing perhaps might be against her—she was decidedly out of spirits." Randulph finished his glass.

"Who are you speaking of?" asked Kitty, who, in her anxiety about Randulph, had not caught the previous remark.

"Hilda Scarve," replied Sir Singleton. "She is considered very beautiful. But she won't bear a comparison with some one I could point out."

"I accept the compliment, Sir Singleton," rejoined Kitty, smiling. "I have heard of this fair creature before. Give me some ratafia, Mr. Crew, and pledge me. I can play the hostess, you perceive."

"To perfection, as you play everything else," returned Randulph.

"Why, you have only seen me in one part, and can't therefore judge," she replied. "However, I accept the compliment, as I have just done Sir Singleton's."

Trussell had felt some uneasiness about his nephew during the latter part of the conversation, but he now hoped the danger was past. He was mistaken.

"I forgot to say, Mr. Crew," remarked Sir

Singleton, with a little covert malice, "that Villiers paid the miser's daughter very marked attention, and devoted himself to her almost exclusively during the whole time I remained."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Randulph, turning pale.

"And how did she receive his attentions?" interposed Trussell adroitly.

"Why, coldly enough, I must say," replied Sir Singleton.

"Was her father with her?—did he sit near her?" asked Randulph breathlessly.

"No; he was at cards, and thereby hangs a tale, which I will tell you anon. She was attended by Sir Norfolk Salusbury, who, I believe, is a relation of hers."

"Sir Norfolk is her cousin on her mother's side," remarked Trussell.

"He is a stiff punctilious old fellow," laughed Sir Singleton. "He didn't seem in the least to approve of Villiers' attentions to Hilda, and I shouldn't wonder if they fight about her to-morrow. But now for the story I promised you. Old Scarve, who, it seems, is a capital whist player——"

"He was always so reputed," observed Trussell.

"And with reason, as you will find," rejoined Sir Singleton. "Well, he sat down to cards, in the early part of the evening, with Sir Bulkeley Price, and in less than an hour won twelve thousand pounds off him."

"Twelve thousand pounds, Sir Singleton!" exclaimed Trussell. "You amaze me."

"It amazed everybody else, too, I assure you,"

replied Sir Singleton. "Sir Bulkeley had had to much wine; and he went on losing and doublin his bets, until his losses amounted to the sum I'v mentioned. I tried to stop him, but it was of n avail. You should have seen the old miser rise fron the table after his success. I never beheld suc fearful exultation. His eyes literally blazed, an he walked like a young man. Sir Bulkeley got u at the same time, with a very flushed face, and said 'You shall have your winnings to-morrow, Mr Scarve.' To which the miser replied, with a bitte sneer, 'The mortgage will do as well, Sir Bulkeley.'

"A home thrust! and just like him," said Trussell "Well, I've lost some money in my time, but neve anything like this."

"I wish I could have such luck as the miser, said Kitty; "I'd leave off acting and take to gam ing. But you've been talking so hard that you'v forgotten to eat, gentlemen. For my own part, should be glad of some champagne."

Her glass was instantly filled by Randulph, an Sir Singleton challenged the elderly lady. Th conversation then became very lively. Kitty pre sently volunteered a song, which she executed s charmingly, that it quite ravished her auditors. I fact, her sprightliness, beauty, and accomplishment coupled with her winning manners and good-nature made her almost irresistible — and so Randulp found. The champagne circulated freely, and it effects began to be slightly manifest on the two elderl gentlemen. Again Kitty poured forth her clear an melodious voice in song, when the door opened, an

a young man entered the room. It was Philip Frewin. He looked surprised and annoyed at seeing the party, and a flush of anger rose to his cheek as he recognised Randulph. Kitty Conway carelessly motioned him to a chair, which he took almost mechanically. Sir Singleton and Trussell slightly acknowledged his presence, but Randulph sternly regarded him.

"I believe, sir," he said, "you are the person I saw at Mr. Scarve's, and whom I previously met at the Folly on the Thames. May I ask the meaning of the masquerade attire you assumed yesterday?"

"You are under some mistake, sir," rejoined Philip, with great effrontery. "I know nothing of Mr. Scarve."

"Not know him!" cried Randulph in amazement. "I understood you were his nephew, Philip Frewin."

"I am no relation to Mr. Scarve, and my name is not Philip Frewin," replied the other.

Kitty Conway here burst into a loud laugh, which she continued in spite of Philip's angry looks.

"Will you oblige me with your real name, then?" demanded Randulph, after a pause.

"No, sir, I will not," replied Philip. "What the devil is it to you what I am called? I am not accountable to you for my actions. How comes this impertinent fellow here, Kitty?" he added, turning to her.

"He comes by my invitation," she rejoined; "and if you do not like his company, you can leave the house."

"It is for him to leave, not me," replied Philip.

"If he won't go quietly, I shall be under the necessity of turning him out."

Kitty uttered a faint scream, and Randulph sprang to his feet, while the rest of the party regarded each other in dismay, as if in expectation of a scene.

Under the influence of excessive passion, which supplied him with a courage foreign to his craven nature, Philip strode towards Randulph, apparently with the intention of carrying his threat into execution; but, before he could reach him, Kitty threw herself between them. Under her shelter, Philip became so violent in his manner, and offensive in his language, that at last Randulph lost his patience, and snatching Sir Singleton's clouded cane from him, he pushed Kitty aside, and began to lay it with considerable energy upon Philip's shoulders.

Roaring lustily, the latter made for the door, and Randulph pursued him, Kitty following closely after him, to see that no mischief ensued. In this way, they hurried along the lobby, where Philip got open the street-door, and darted out with such rapidity that he ran against a tall man who chanced to be passing at the time, and who instantly caught hold of him.

Before his captor walked two other persons, preceded by a link-boy, and the latter, hearing the noise, turned round and threw his light full upon the party. The persons in advance were the miser and his daughter, who were returning from Lady Brabazon's, and the tall man was no other than Jacob Post. At this moment Randulph rushed

forth; but on seeing the miser and his daughter, he halted in dismay, which was not diminished as Kitty Conway came up and caught hold of his arm. It was an embarrassing situation certainly, and Randulph was so confounded that he could not utter a word.

Jacob, meanwhile, having discovered the prize he had caught, lost no time in announcing his good luck. "Look here, sir!" he cried triumphantly; "look at your miserly nephew! I have him fast enough. Look at the clothes he has on. Mayhap he'll deny himself now. Look at him, I say, sir! and satisfy yourself that it's him, for he'll outswear me afterwards if you don't."

"What! Philip!" cried the miser, "is it really you?"

"It is, sir," replied Philip. "And if you will order your servant to release me, I will explain how I came to be here, and in this dress. I have been put in peril of my life by Randulph Crew, who stands there with his mistress."

"Release him, Jacob," said the miser.

"I'd rather you'd let me take him to Saint James's Roundhouse," replied Jacob; "I'm sure it's the fittest place for him."

"Do as I bid you, rascal!" cried Scarve authoritatively. "Now then, what is the meaning of all this, Philip?"

"Do not inquire further, father," cried Hilda, trembling violently. "Come away, I beseech you."

Seeing that Randulph was unable to speak, Kitty Conway advanced towards the miser.

"I can explain what has happened in a moment," she said.

"Father!" said Hilda in a determined tone, "if you will not accompany me, I will walk forward by myself."

"I'm ready to go with you," said Jacob.

"Well, well, I'm coming," replied the miser—"some other time, nephew—some other time."

As the miser and his daughter moved off in one direction, Philip, fearful of the consequences of remaining, ran off in the other. At this moment, Trussell and Sir Singleton appeared at the door.

"Well, have you got rid of him?" cried the former.

"Look where he runs," laughed Kitty. "Who do you think chanced to be passing at the very time we came forth?"

"Perhaps the miser and his daughter," said Trussell.

"A good guess," replied Kitty.

"The devil!" exclaimed Trussell—"and they saw you with my nephew? Why, this is worse than the Folly on the Thames!"

"Far worse!" groaned Randulph. "My hopes are now utterly destroyed!"

"I don't understand you," said Kitty; "but come into the house."

"No," replied Randulph bitterly; "and I would I had never entered it."

"For Heaven's sake, Randulph, consider what you are about," cried Trussell; "this rudeness to a pretty woman who has shown you so much kindness! I blush for you."

"I am no longer master of myself," cried Randulph.

And murmuring some apology to Kitty, he bade her good-night, and walked off with his uncle.

"Well, here's a pretty conclusion to the supper," said Kitty to the old bean. "I don't know whether to laugh or cry; but perhaps I'd better laugh. Randulph Crew is an odd young man, but he's very handsome, and that makes up for a thousand singularities."

"He has very bad taste, Kitty," replied Sir Singleton, "for he's blind to your attractions, and adores Hilda Scarve."

"So it seems," she replied, in a tone of pique. "And now, good-night, Sir Singleton."

"Not just yet, sweet Kitty," he cried, following her. "I've a great deal to say to you. I shall make you another handsome present to-morrow."

"Then keep what you have to say till then," she rejoined, slapping the door unceremoniously in his face.

IV

Randulph's Career of Gaiety—Abel's Remarks upon it to Mr. Jukes.

RANDULPH'S reflections on awaking the next morning were not of the most enviable kind; and bitterly did he reproach himself for his imprudence. Fate seemed determined to place an insurmountable bar between him and the object of his hopes, and he, at last, in some degree, consoled himself, as many others

have done before him, by thinking that he was rather the victim of necessity than of his own misconduct. Throughout the early part of the day, he continued in a state of deep depression, from which Trussell in vain tried to rouse him.

As to Abel, having ascertained from Mr. Jukes the cause of his despondency, he forebore to question him about it, and even feigned not to notice it. It required some little persuasion to induce him to dine with Lady Brabazon that day; but once in the atmosphere of her ladyship's wit and pleasantry, he soon revived. Divining, with true feminine tact, the cause of his dejection, she speedily dissipated it by her fine powers of raillery; and to his own surprise, he passed a very agreeable evening, and quitted the house more than half in love with its fair mistress.

Satisfied with the impression she had produced, Lady Brabazon did not fail to improve it. She included him in all her parties for a month to come, and took care to involve him in such a round of gaiety and fashionable dissipation, that he could not by any means extricate himself from it. The effect of this was soon manifest in his habits, in his attire, and in his manners; and though the change was mightily approved of by Trussell, it was viewed in a very different light by his more sagacious and far-sighted uncle.

"Well, Jukes," said the latter, one day, to his butler, "my first opinion of Randulph is fully borne out by his conduct."

"Why, he is rather gay, to be sure," replied Mr.

Jukes. "But I don't give him up yet. Young men, as Mr. Trussell says, will be young men."

"But there's no occasion for them to be young rakes," said Abel sharply. "My nephew is a sad dissipated dog. Lady Brabazon seems to have got him completely into her toils."

"Ah! she's a dangerous woman!" said Mr. Jukes, lifting up his hands—"a dangerous woman!"

"And the pretty actress, Kitty Conway?" pursued Abel. "He sups with her occasionally, eh?"

"I fear he does, sir," replied Mr. Jukes.

"*Fear*—you *know* he does, sirrah," cried Abel. "Why attempt to equivocate? What masquerade were they talking of at breakfast this morning?"

"What, haven't you heard of it, sir?" replied the butler. "It's a grand masquerade to be held at Ranelagh on Thursday. All the world is going there; and, amongst others, my graceless nephew, Crackenthorpe Cripps."

"What! in his master's clothes, as before?" said Abel.

"No, sir," replied Mr. Jukes; "as harlequin."

"Harlequin!" echoed Abel, "that will suit him exactly. And I hope the silly widow he is paying his addresses to will go as columbine."

"Precisely what she means to do, sir," laughed Mr. Jukes.

"Get me a domino before Thursday, Jukes; I'll go to this masquerade myself," said Abel.

"Why, sir, you're becoming as great a rake as your nephew," returned Mr. Jukes laughingly. "If I might be permitted, I should like to go with you

to Ranelagh. I wish to have an eye on Crackenthorpe. Ah, sir! our nephews are sad plagues to us—sad plagues!"

"My nephew shall not plague me much longer," replied Abel. "I'll give him another month, and then——"

"You'll give him another after that," interrupted the butler.

"No, I won't," rejoined Abel; "I won't give him a day, nor an hour longer. I've spent nearly a hundred pounds upon him already—upon his dress—his amusements—his profligacies. No, I'll pack him off into the country. By-the-bye, his mother has written to say she is coming to town. I've endeavoured to dissuade her from the step, but she says she is uneasy about Randulph."

"Well, I hope she'll come," returned Mr. Jukes; "I'm sure she's wanted just now."

"I've no wish to see her," said Abel sternly. "There has been a coolness between us for years."

"Then the sooner it is got rid of the better," rejoined the butler. "Don't let the grave close over it. Her presence, I think, is very desirable. And on her son's account, as well as yours, I'm glad she's coming."

"Don't calculate upon it," cried Abel, "for I don't think it likely. If I can hinder it I will."

"While we're on confidential matters, sir," said Mr. Jukes, "may I ask how Miss Scarve is getting on?"

"Well enough, for aught I know," rejoined Abel

testily; "I've neither heard from her, nor seen her, since my visit to her father. And now I wish to be alone. Take care to get me a domino before Thursday."

V

Randulph receives a Letter from his Mother—Its effect upon him—His Good Resolutions defeated by Trussell.

RANDULPH'S mother had only written to him twice since his arrival in town—for in those days ladies, especially country ladies, were neither so active nor so exacting in their correspondence, as at present—when one day, just as he was sallying forth on a pleasurable expedition with Trussell, a letter was delivered to him by Mr. Jukes, bearing her superscription. Glancing at it with some misgiving, he would have broken the seal; but Trussell, noticing his reluctance, and guessing the cause, advised him to put it in his pocket, and read it on his return at night.

"Good advice," he said laughingly; "it is all the better for keeping—its chief recommendation being that it is just as effectual a month afterwards as at the moment given."

"If it had been a billet from Lady Brabazon or Kitty Conway, he would have opened it without hesitation," remarked Abel, who stood by.

"To be sure," replied Trussell, "and he would have done quite right, because such a note would

require immediate attention, and, as a man of breeding, he could not leave it a moment unanswered."

"And am I to infer, therefore, that a mother's letter is to be put aside?" rejoined Abel.

"Not exactly, sir," laughed Trussell; "but when one knows that it contains a lecture, one naturally feels indisposed to read it. That I suppose you can understand."

"I understand no such thing," replied Abel tartly; "but I perfectly understand how excessive addiction to pleasure injures the best principles and chills the warmest affections. Filial love and duty have little influence when dissipation has obtained the sway."

"I acknowledge the justness of your rebuke, uncle," said Randulph, "and will read the letter instantly."

"On no account," rejoined Abel; "pursue your first impulse. It will 'keep,' as my brother says, till to-night, and you may possibly be then in a better frame of mind for its perusal. When you have possessed yourself of its contents, I shall be glad to be made acquainted with them." And, turning away, he retreated to the library.

It was late when Randulph returned, after a day spent in gaiety, as usual, and on retiring to his own room, his first business was to take out his mother's letter. Opening it, he eagerly scanned its contents, which ran thus:—

"My dear Son,—The accounts I have received of your mode of life have given me inexpressible uneasiness. A mother's hopes are perhaps seldom

fulfilled, and my expectations, I now feel, were too sanguine ever to be realised. Still, I did not anticipate such complete disappointment as I have experienced. With your generous nature and quick impulses, I should not have been surprised at your being led into slight indiscretions; but that you should have plunged so deeply into dissipation, and connected yourself with persons so very profligate, grieves me to the heart. Your conduct, I believe, is mainly attributable to bad advice, and therefore, in some degree, to be excused. Your uncle Trussell is not without principle, and has a kindly disposition; but the enjoyment of the moment is all he cares for, and he is utterly reckless of consequences. I thought I had sufficiently guarded you against him; but I now see my error, and feel that I ought never to have introduced you to society so dangerous. My reliance was in your uncle Abel. I persuaded myself you would discern the good that lies beneath the surface of that excellent man, and anticipated much from your introduction to him. Not the least, therefore, of my affliction is the knowledge that you have forfeited his good opinion. Let me hope it is not too late to regain it. In your first letter you spoke of Hilda Scarve in terms of the highest admiration. I have been informed from another source that she is as highly gifted as beautiful, and I confess it would have delighted me to see you united to her. I am aware there are obstacles in the way; but they might perhaps have been removed. Here again your misconduct, or, to give it its mildest term, your imprudence, has been pre-

judicial to you. On another point—namely, your interview with the mysterious individual beneath the cloisters of Westminster Abbey—I do not deem it prudent to write. In conclusion, my dear son, I beseech you to pause in your headlong career, to abandon the worthless society you have formed, and to place yourself under the guidance of your uncle Abel. He can save you. And that he may do so is the fervent prayer of your most affectionate mother, SOPHIA CREW."

Randulph read this letter over and over again, and each time with self-reproaches. He thought his mother viewed his indiscretions in too serious a light, but he could not disguise from himself that her fears were well grounded. What chiefly affected him, however, was the passage referring to Hilda, and its reperusal caused him to pace his chamber with agitated steps. At last he became calmer, and sought his couch; but he could not sleep, and in the morning arose feverish and unrefreshed. His uncles were at the breakfast table before him; but though both noticed his dejected and haggard appearance, neither commented upon it. On the contrary, Trussell was livelier than usual, and rattled away about the masquerade to be given at Ranelagh on the following day, dilating upon the amusement to be expected at it. All at once, Randulph broke silence.

"I do not intend to go to the masquerade, uncle," he said.

"Not go!" exclaimed Trussell, laying down a

piece of broiled ham which he was conveying to his mouth. "Not go!—why not, in the name of wonder?"

Abel eyed his nephew narrowly.

"I have been too much at such places of late," replied Randulph.

Trussell burst into a derisive laugh.

"I see how it is," he said; "you have received a dose of good counsel from your mother, and are labouring from its effects."

"I trust I shall profit by the advice I have received," replied Randulph; "and, as the first step towards it, I mean to abstain from the masquerade at Ranelagh."

Abel fastened his grey eyes upon him, as if he would read his soul, but made no remark.

"Well, well, do as you please, my dear boy," said Trussell, "do as you please. I shan't attempt to persuade you. But a moment's reflection will convince you that your mother is not in a condition to judge of your conduct. She can only learn what you are doing by report; and report always exaggerates. Her alarm is quite natural. You are a devilish handsome fellow—very much liked by the women—very much courted by persons of quality. People in the country are terribly afraid of pretty women and great folks; but you know that both are perfectly harmless. My only uneasiness about you," he added, with a dry cough, and a side glance at his brother, "is, that your means are rather inadequate to your expenses. But you may be richer one of these days."

"I see little prospect of it," muttered Abel.

"I think there is every prospect of his making a good match, sir—but that is neither here nor there," replied Trussell.

"I hope you don't allude to Beau Villiers' cast-off mistress, Lady Brabazon," said Abel. "I would rather he married Kitty Conway than that worthless woman. There is at least some honesty about the actress."

"Do not be apprehensive on that score, uncle," rejoined Randulph; "I am not likely to be so duped. My eyes are opened to my folly."

"How long will they continue so?" sneered Abel. "Satiety begets loathing, but with a fresh appetite you will begin anew."

"I hope he will," said Trussell, "for I cannot, for the life of me, discover the harm he has committed."

"It would surprise me if you did," observed Abel contemptuously. The conversation here dropped, and the party continued their breakfast in silence. At its close, the elder uncle quitted the room.

"You were somewhat rash in forming the resolution you have just announced, Randulph," observed Trussell, as soon as they were alone. "I didn't like to say so before my brother; but I felt quite sure of your going to the masquerade, notwithstanding your declaration to the contrary."

"You are mistaken, sir," replied Randulph, with the air of a person who has come to an unalterable determination.

"No, I am not," rejoined Trussell, smiling; "and

when I tell you that Hilda Scarve will be there, I rather fancy you will acknowledge the correctness of my remark."

"Ah! that alters the case, indeed," exclaimed Randulph. "But are you sure of what you tell me?"

"As sure as we are now sitting together," replied Trussell. "She is going there under the escort of her relation, Sir Norfolk Salusbury."

"Then of course I must go," cried Randulph. "I wouldn't lose the chance of meeting her for the world."

"But you forget—you have been too much at such places of late," jeered Trussell.

"One more visit can make no difference," rejoined Randulph.

"But there's no knowing what it may lead to," pursued Trussell. "Recollect your eyes are now open to your folly—ha! ha!"

"Laugh as much as you please, uncle," replied Randulph. "I do not go to see the masquerade—but to meet Hilda."

"Well, I'm glad of your determination, on whatever plea you put it," rejoined Trussell seriously.

At this juncture, Abel reappeared. "Well, Randulph," he said, regarding him—"still of the same mind? No masquerade to-morrow, eh?"

"I fear you will have little confidence in me in future, when I tell you I have decided upon going," replied Randulph, colouring with shame.

"I expected as much," replied Abel coldly. "I

knew you would not be proof against your uncle's powers of persuasion."

"Indeed, sir, I have not persuaded him," said Trussell. "Have I, Randulph?"

"You have not," was the reply.

"Then let me give you one piece of advice, Randulph," observed Abel. "Don't boast of your good resolutions until you have given them a trial."

END OF VOL. I.

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